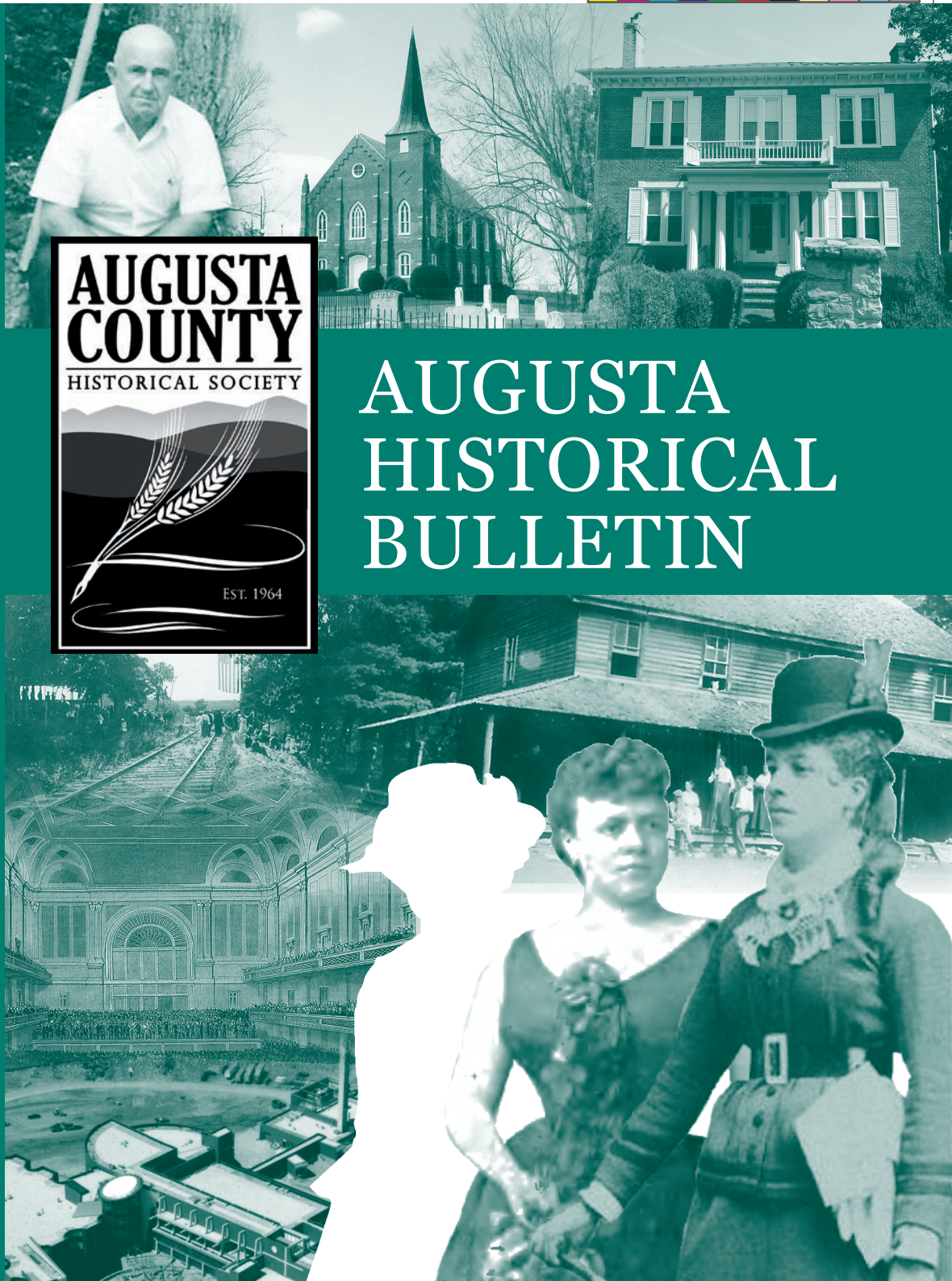


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VOLUME 55 – 2019



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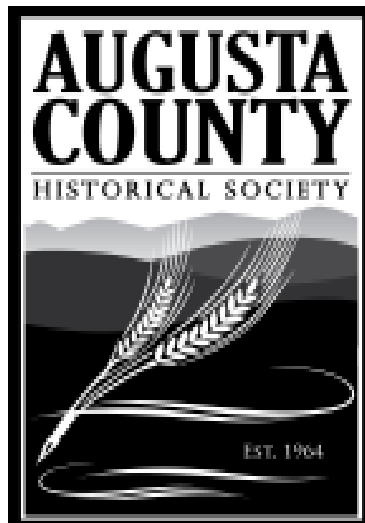
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Augusta County Historical Society

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Augusta Historical Bulletin: Editorial Policy

The editors of the *Augusta Historical Bulletin* welcome submissions relating to any topic or period in the history of Augusta County, Virginia, and its wider environs. Submissions may take the form of articles, research notes, edited documents, or indexes to historical documents. Other formats might be acceptable, but prospective authors of such submissions are encouraged to consult with a member of the editorial board. With rare exceptions, the *Bulletin* does not publish manuscripts that focus exclusively on genealogical matters. Authors should strive to make their contributions accessible to a broad readership. In matters of form and style, authors should adhere to the guidelines and strictures set forth in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed., or Kate L. Turabian, et al., *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed., both of which are widely available in libraries and bookstores. A style sheet, prepared by the editors of the *Bulletin*, is available upon request. Authors should submit four double-spaced copies of their manuscripts, with endnotes where applicable, and include photocopies of any illustrations. Upon acceptance of the manuscript for publication, authors must provide an electronic copy of it, as well as publishable-quality illustrations.

Manuscripts or requests for style sheets should be sent to: The Augusta County Historical Society, Attention: Bulletin Editors, P.O. Box 686, Staunton, Virginia 24402-0686. Please try to submit proposed manuscripts by September 1, 2020. Queries may also be sent to: Nancy Sorrells (lotswife@comcast.net).

1619: Virginia's Red Letter Year

By Katharine L. Brown, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: The year 1619 marked a significant milestone in Virginia history. Four hundred years later, many of the significant events surrounding what Katharine Brown calls "the big three" in this talk that she presented, are still relevant today. It is, therefore, fitting that four hundred years after 1619, the Bulletin begins with Brown's lecture, and is followed by two more articles that address our area's African-American and women's history.

The reader might wonder why events in the Jamestown area more than a century before the sturdy Scots-Irish and German settlers began sinking their roots in Augusta County soil should be a matter of significance to the history of this area. It is the author's hope that this essay will convince you that three events in that year 1619 were of critical importance to Valley settlers and all their descendants down to the present.

Here are the BIG THREE in chronological order:

1. The meeting of the first elected representative legislature in the New World
2. The recruitment of single English women to enable family formation and settlement in the overwhelmingly male Virginia colony.
3. The arrival of the first enslaved Africans in the British North American colonies

Readers raised in Virginia and educated in its schools may be familiar with these events, but most Americans reach maturity in ignorance of them. Why is that?

You have probably heard it said that "The winners write the history."

Public schools across the United States really took off in the years right after the Civil War. The curriculum and the textbooks were dominated by the winners of that long and bloody conflict. The founding stories of the nation emphasized in the textbooks were those of the people who settled the Northern colonies. The virtuous Pilgrims and Puritans were the founders who captured the American imagination. Jamestown was noted in textbooks chiefly for mention of Pocahontas, while its settlers were dismissed as lazy gentry looking for gold.

The three events whose anniversaries we marked in 2019 took place before the Pilgrims ever set foot on Plymouth Rock or even climbed aboard the *Mayflower*. It can be argued that events during English colonization at Jamestown have been more important for the long-term development of this nation than most developments in the Northern colonies.

Before we examine the Big Three of 1619, let us look briefly at developments in Virginia prior to 1619, so that we can see why those three events were so important for shaping the future of that first permanent English colony in the New World.

Aside from a few short-term, unsuccessful attempts such as the Roanoke Colony of North Carolina in the 1580s with its mysterious end, the Jamestown settlement of the Virginia Company in 1607 was the first real English colony.

Jamestown did not have a happy or easy beginning. The only models for American colonization were the Spanish and the Portuguese who dominated the 1500s throughout the Caribbean Islands, Central America, South America, Mexico and Florida. Their colonization efforts were government-sponsored examples of military conquest, plundering, and the elimination of Native peoples by conquest, disease and enslavement, then their replacement with imported African slaves. Spanish and Portuguese settlements were often missions operated by Catholic religious orders and military forts rather than family-oriented communities.

In contrast with the officially sponsored Spanish and Portuguese colonies, the Jamestown settlement was an early capitalist venture, a private colony, not a government operation. Its intention was to find ways of making profit in North America from animals, minerals, and vegetables.

The difficult first decade at Jamestown included many mistakes such as ruinous competition among leaders, a mixed relationship with the Native inhabitants—sometimes good, but largely bad; a swampy location that bred disease; insufficient re-supply ships from the Virginia Company; terrible luck in the chief supply expedition getting marooned by a hurricane in Bermuda for a year; an unsuccessful experiment in military rule; the sheer bad luck in settling during the “drought of a century,” and a period of starvation that led to some examples of cannibalism. The record of the early years is not good, but it is useful to remember that everything they did was an experiment. Later colonies could learn from their mistakes.

The Virginia Company had learned that those who were given land of their own after laboring their seven years for the company produced

far larger crops than when laboring only for the Company. Their excess production could feed new settlers. Private ownership of land thus became a key to recruiting new settlers and investors in the Company. Large land grants were made to large investors and to top government officials in Virginia, while the former laborers received small grants.

After years of failure to find a product to export and make money for the Virginia Company, the settlers finally found gold—but it was a golden leaf—tobacco, not a metal. That market crop with a high demand in Europe attracted new settlers and some families, and the colony was beginning to thrive. But it needed better direction and leadership.

That direction came from Sir Edwin Sandys (1561-1629), who led the Virginia Company reforms in the government and operation of the colony. The son of the Archbishop of York, Sandys studied at Oxford and became a close friend of the important Anglican theologian Richard Hooker. Sandys espoused a moderate form of Anglicanism in opposition to the radical Puritans and envisioned a vital role for the church in Virginia, especially in conversion of the Indians.

Sandys became a member of the governing council of the Virginia Company where he espoused the idea of a Christian Commonwealth for Virginia. He was well-versed in political theories and was influenced by church teachings and civic humanism. A key goal of a commonwealth was to strike a happy balance between private enterprise and the public good. Vital aspects of such a commonwealth included:

- Just laws and the rule of law

- Local self-government

- Representative legislative body working with governor and council

- Protection of private property

- Public works to benefit the whole community

- A diversified economy based on a variety of crops and of industries

- Encouragement of trade

- Anglican church integrating English settlers with converted Native Americans

First of the Big Three: An Elected Representative Legislature

A new charter from the company in 1619 comprised a sort of Magna Charta that provided

A Council of State appointed by the company to work with the governor and to serve as the superior court for the colony

An elected General Assembly

In late June 1619, the new governor, Sir George Yeardley, sent writs to the four boroughs and seven plantations for the freeholders and tenants to elect two representatives by a plurality of votes. These would be the **burgesses** in that first General Assembly, in the body that was known as the House of Burgesses until the American Revolution in 1776.

On Friday 30 July 1619 that first General Assembly met in the new timber frame church at Jamestown. The group consisted of the governor, his four appointed councilors, the secretary of the colony—all these appointed by the Virginia Company—and the twenty-two elected burgesses.

This is one of the most important events in the history of the British North American colonies.

The group organized and operated in the same manner as Parliament in England. The meeting opened with prayer by the Anglican minister in Jamestown, and then each member swore an oath of allegiance to the king. The group was divided into committees to review the Great Charter of the Colony from the Company, to find items of concern; to review the governor's instructions and report recommendations on turning them into laws.

The areas in which they developed laws included:

1. setting tobacco prices
2. regulating trading voyages in the bay
3. enforcing contracts with tradesmen, tenants, and servants
4. encouraging production of a range of crops
5. laws regulating drunkenness, gambling, idleness
6. advice on maintaining peaceful relations with Indians
7. Assignment of punishment of moral offenses to ministers and church wardens as in England, rather than to civil courts.

Finally, the Assembly functioned as a Court and heard some cases of grievances brought by settlers in matters of debt, land, and interpersonal relations. If we think carefully about it, this body set the precedent for the operation of all our state legislatures and of our Congress down to the present. It is hard to overestimate its importance in the development of this nation.

Governor Yeardley prorogued the assembly until 1 March 1620. This was an important move, as that indicated this elected representative legislative body was to be a continuing part of creating an orderly Christian Commonwealth in Virginia under the rule of law.

Second of the Big Three: The Women

It is NOT true that there were no women at Jamestown or in the Virginia colony until 1619. There were women of all classes, from low to high. The first women arrived in Jamestown in 1608, including a Mistress Forrest and her maid Anne Burras. Anne's was the first wedding in Jamestown when she married a carpenter, John Laydon. They became the parents of four daughters.

A woman of high status was Temperance Flowerdew, who arrived in 1609 with 400 new colonists, both men and women. Temperance survived the "starving time" in the winter of 1609-1610, when nearly eighty percent of the settlers died of hunger and disease. She returned to England a widow but came back to Virginia in 1619—the big year—with her new husband, Governor Sir George Yeardley.

Of course, there was one less woman in 1610 during the starving time after one man killed his wife and ate her. This shocking and heart-breaking cannibalism episode was revealed through recent archaeology at Jamestown.

The problem in Virginia was a serious gender imbalance. With an early impermanent military emphasis for the colony, few women had been encouraged to settle. Some of the few sent out had been in prison for various offenses and did not represent the best of English womanhood.

By 1619 The Virginia Company leadership understood the importance of selectively recruiting more women to settle in Virginia. In his vision for a Virginia commonwealth, Sir Edwin Sandys stated that

'...the plantation can never flourish till families be planted and the respect of wives and children fix the people on the soil'

The company ordered that "a fit hundredth might be sent of women, maids young and uncorrupt, to make wives to the inhabitants and by that means to make the men there more settled and less movable..."

The company advertised for "young, handsome, and honestly educated maids." Testimonial letters from friends, relatives, employers, and ministers indicate that the women who applied and were recruited were a respectable lot with the potential to create stable families in a Christian Commonwealth across the Atlantic.

Anne Rickard, a young widow, was one. The churchwardens of St. James Clerkenwell Parish in London wrote her positive testimonial. Mary Ghibbs, born in Cambridge twenty years before, got her uncle and his colleague associated with the Virginia Company to recommend her. Anne

Jackson obtained permission to emigrate from her father, a gardener in Westminster, while Margaret Bourdman, niece of Sir John Gypson presented good recommendations from neighbors and her employer. Ann Tanner, daughter of a farmer had not married by age twenty-seven, so decided to try her luck in Virginia, stating that she could spin, sew, brew, bake and make cheese and butter—highly valued skills in the colony.

The Virginia Company covered transportation costs of the 132 young women they recruited by 1621, and promised clothing, bedding, and a white coif, the cap that married women wore as a sign of their status.

All 132 had married by the end of 1621. Each man had to pay the Virginia Company 150 pounds of tobacco, less than the cost of outfitting and transporting a woman. Some writers have called this “brides for sale” considering it a form of abuse and male dominance. A more balanced view reminds that marriage arrangements in the 1600s usually involved some value exchange so that a man could show that he could provide for a wife and establish a household, and that the young woman was not being placed in the hands of someone unsuitable. The Company had stated that no woman was to be pressured to marry any one whom she did not wish to marry. This set a precedent for some respect for the liberty of English women in Virginia.

This project was a success. By 1622 many more farmers had taken up land from the company, married these women, and settled down to creating families. The Company and the settlers had demonstrated that this settlement model was one that the English should follow as they proceeded with other colonizing efforts in North America.

Third of the Big Three: Arrival of Africans in Virginia

While the first two developments of 1619 offered a successful and positive model for the extension of English people, values, and ways of life into North America, the third event ushered in a very different model for the American future, one that would cast a long, shadow on our national life; one whose ramifications continue to the present and show few signs of abating.

Just when the Virginia Company was recruiting suitable young women for Virginia and just three weeks after that first elected legislative assembly met, in late August 1619 a ship called the *White Lion* appeared at Point Comfort in the Chesapeake Bay.

The *White Lion* was a privateer—an armed ship that was privately

owned and manned but was commissioned by a government to harass or fight enemy shipping. This ship and its mate, the *Treasurer*, which arrived at Point Comfort a few days later, were commissioned by the Dutch, but they were English owned and manned ships. For several decades English privateers had attacked Spanish shipping bearing wealth from Mexico, Peru, and the Caribbean islands home to Spain. For diplomatic reasons, the Crown did not like ships recognizably English to do this, so a Dutch registry was popular with English privateers.

Those two ships, the *White Lion* and the *Treasurer*, had just been in the Caribbean attacking a Portuguese ship called the *San Juan Bautista* (*St. John the Baptist*), which was carrying 230 African captives toward Mexico to be sold as slaves.

All three ships were injured in this battle. The English ships took fifty-five to sixty of the Africans off of the *San Juan Bautista* and decided to head for Jamestown, where they hoped to sell their booty, be re-supplied with food, and get repaired.

That remarkable early Virginian, John Rolfe, who introduced the cultivation of tobacco and married Pocahontas, was on hand to witness the *White Lion's* arrival and to write the only surviving account of this important event to Sir Edwin Sandys in London:

"He brought not anything but 20 and odd Negroes, which the Governor and Cape Merchant bought for victuals (whereof he was in great need as he pretended) at the best and easiest rates they could."

The second ship, the *Treasurer*, arrived four days later. Its owner was a member of the Virginia Company, but one who opposed Sandys' idea of a Christian Commonwealth, favoring instead a military trading model for Virginia. That ship did not tarry long but apparently sold some of its Africans before it departed for Bermuda.

These Africans were sold to just a few of the wealthier planters, including the governor, Sir George Yeardley, who bought eight. Abraham Piersey, who owned the large Flowerdew Hundred plantation upriver from Jamestown, bought seven. These transactions sold enslaved human beings for food supplies. These were not indentured servants destined for freedom when a few years of servitude expired.

How could slavery have slipped so easily into the twelve-year old colony of Virginia? Slavery did not exist in England and medieval vestiges of unfree labor had all but disappeared.

Slavery had existed in world civilizations for thousands of years.

Western civilization has examples in ancient Greece and Roman, in the Hebrew scriptures, and in the Christian New Testament. Those slaves were usually war prizes. They were not of a different race, not necessarily slaves for their lifetime, and did not pass the status to their children. America's slavery was racial from the outset and early became heritable. Why in 1619, was this small group of Africans immediately understood to be slaves?

A quick look at the development of African slavery in western Europe in the Age of Discovery provides a background to the development in Jamestown. The Portuguese were the great naval explorers in Europe, under Prince Henry the Navigator in the 1400s. They sailed down the coast of Africa, where they developed trade relations with kingdoms in today's Angola. Tribal wars among African kingdoms made captives available along with other trade goods. Starting in 1440 these Africans were brought to Europe and sold for slaves in Spain and Portugal.

The first slave market in Europe was at the fortified town of Lagos, near where Prince Henry the Navigator launched his work. I stood in that market in April 2019 and thought of the chain of events forged in there. Like the iron chains around the ankles of those captives, that chain that stretched across the Atlantic to every part of the New World, bringing untold suffering to millions of human beings, while at the same time creating wealth and power for some others.

So, European participation in African slavery had been developed fifty years before Columbus discovered America and was imported to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas more than a century before the English inserted themselves into Virginia at Jamestown in 1607. The English were very aware of the extensive use the Spanish and Portuguese made of African slaves in their colonies and the resulting wealth they produced from mining gold and silver, and growing sugar cane and tobacco.

The use of slave labor was not in Sir Edwin Sandys' plan for a Christian Commonwealth in Virginia. But Sandys was not in Virginia, and some settlers there had no problem with owning and using slave labor. And so, when those two privateers appeared at Point Comfort in dire need of food and with nothing to trade for it but some enslaved Africans, a few prominent men at Jamestown were willing to make that trade.

In the past quarter-century our knowledge has expanded through the amazing amount of research and publication done about the early Transatlantic world, its trading relations, and on European-African-American contacts. We know that the *Treasurer* made a return trip to Virginia from

Bermuda in February 1620 with half a dozen more Africans. Those plus the “20 and odd” Africans from the *White Lion* and a few from the *Treasurer* in September 1619 came to a total of thirty-two “Negroes” who were listed in a census of all residents in Virginia in March 1620.

From that careful research, we now know that these thirty-two persons, seventeen women and fifteen men, came from West Central Africa where the Portuguese had been active for 130 years, most likely from the Christian Catholic Kingdom of Kongo or its neighboring province of Ndongo, where there had been an active slave trade for two centuries. In the late 1500s., Portugal undertook military conquest of what is now Angola. An especially brutal period in 1618-19 likely provided thousands of new captives transported to the Americas, thirty-two of whom ended up in Virginia. By the time those thirty-two came to Virginia, the Spanish and Portuguese had already shipped 500,000 African captives to their American colonies.

Historians have long debated whether slavery and racial prejudice developed gradually in Virginia from indentured servitude for Africans as well as Europeans, or whether it was present from early days of the colony. Those who believe it was gradual point to the fact that there are no laws about slavery on Virginia’s books until the 1660s when laws appear specifying lifelong servitude for Africans, and that the condition of a mixed-race child followed that of the mother. The proponents of this view note that there are examples in the early 1600s of Africans who completed servitude and became free planters. This is true, BUT. . .

The large body of recent research seems to tip the balance toward the idea that nearly all Africans imported to Virginia down to the 1650s were treated as slaves. There just were not many of them, probably no more than 500-600, because the labor needs of planters had been met by indentured white servants from England. Other English colonies had turned to wholesale African slavery by 1650, however. This was especially true of Bermuda with tobacco culture and Barbados with the lucrative sugar trade. By the 1660s, when the numbers of English indentured servants declined sharply but when largescale tobacco culture on large plantations dominated the economy, Virginia began importing large numbers of Africans. Slavery had become a major factor in the life and labor of Virginia.

Reflections

So, by 2019 it became our task to assess what these three developments in 1619 meant for our German and Ulster Scots ancestors and settlers in

the Valley of Virginia, nearly a century after they took place. Why should we care, and why should they have cared?

First

Let us consider the first development: an elected representative legislative body.

To English-speaking immigrants from the conquered Irish province of Ulster and to German-speaking immigrants from the Palatinate around 1720 – 1730, direct participation in choosing those who made the laws that governed them was a new experience. The governments they knew were those of hereditary princes, dukes, counts or bishops in the German states, or of a landowning aristocracy in Ulster with a very unrepresentative Anglo-Irish parliament in Dublin. These aristocrats governed through appointed officials and bureaucrats. For the Germans, there were vestiges of feudal ties, because the citizens of their kingdoms, principalities, and duchies were not freed to move away until they had paid fees that compensated the rulers for the loss of their services or taxes. For the Ulster Scots tied to a long-term lease, a purchaser had to be found for the lease.

There was certainly no concept of participation in an election system that offered ordinary citizens a voice in making the laws that governed them. Their closest experience in making choices that affected their lives was at the village level in German states, where residents had a say in deliberations about crops, the use of fields, and of the numbers of craftsmen in the village, or at the local congregation level in Ulster.

As residents of Virginia who moved swiftly to acquire land for their own farms, those Germans and Ulster Scots who settled in the Valley, either directly from Europe or after some years' residence in Pennsylvania, were entitled to vote for the election of their county members of the House of Burgesses. Unfortunately, few records survive to tell us how soon they chose to participate in this right.

Second

The Virginia Company's concept of a land-owning, family-based settlement in Virginia under Sir Edwin Sandys' leadership had an important effect on eighteenth-century immigrants from the outset.

Male emigration to a North American colony, focused on mining or on military service had little appeal. Although many young German men emigrated independently, most Germans approached their ruler as family

men wishing permission to emigrate with their wives and children. Similarly, large numbers of the Ulster Scots Presbyterians who sold their Irish leases in order to buy passage and acquire land in British North America were family units. That Virginia was a society for which land ownership for families was a basic understanding had great appeal to Germans and Ulster Scots. .

The ability of each German or Ulster Scot man to acquire fifty acres from the Crown for himself and fifty for his wife and other family members he imported, or to purchase land from a developer such as William Beverley or Benjamin Borden in Augusta County, was high incentive. They were motivated to put down roots in Virginia on the pattern first encouraged in 1619 when the Virginia Company recruited respectable young women to emigrate with the idea of becoming wives to planters and establishing family farms.

Third

We have limited knowledge of the extent to which early eighteenth-century German immigrants to Virginia, such as those at the 1714 Germanna in the Piedmont, understood that they were coming to a society in which chattel slavery of another race played an important role. Travel literature about America circulated in Germany, starting with William Penn's efforts in the 1680s to recruit Germans to settle Pennsylvania. The rush of Palatine and Rhineland Germans to England in 1709 to get free land in America from Queen Anne had been encouraged by travel literature such as the *Golden Book*. Did any of this mention Africans enslaved in America?

The Germans who began settling the Great Valley of Virginia in the late 1720s and continued in the following decades came mainly from Pennsylvania, where they had opportunity to gain some familiarity with African slavery in the colonies. The same tended to be true of the immigrants of Ulster Scots or Scotch-Irish background who settled in what became Augusta County. Some of them came directly from Ireland, but most had settled in Pennsylvania first and only later moved from Penn's colony to the more restrictive Virginia colony with its established church and its well-established system of chattel slavery.

And how did those German and Scotch-Irish settlers of the Valley react to this Virginia reality and to what extent did they reflect it or reject it? This is a subject that deserves more serious examination, research, and reflection than this essay can provide. The work of Turk McCleskey details

the complexity and subtlety of race and slavery among white settlers, the few free blacks, and the enslaved in the early years of settlement in Augusta. It seems clear than many of the early settlers and their children and grandchildren after them appear to have found little problem with slavery and with slave owning.

These people are not, of course major slave owning planters with twenty or thirty slaves. Evidence from wills, estate inventories, and lists of tithables in Frederick and Augusta counties shows that most of them owned five slaves or fewer. But the number owned is not really the point, is it? The point is that they had adopted the prevailing attitude of the society in which they had settled (and in which the grandchildren had been born and raised) and concluded it was to their advantage to acquire one or more slaves to help them take greater advantage of the opportunity America offered.

So there you have it: Virginia's Red Letter Year of 1619—how its events transformed Virginia for better and for worse, what a huge role they played in making the Virginia that the early Valley settlers encountered, and how those events did so much to form the pattern that made the United States and that shapes our nation today. I hope you would agree that the early textbook writers missed the boat and that these three issues outweigh what the Pilgrims did—and by the way, I didn't even mention it, but Virginians had the First Thanksgiving in 1619 too!

~~~~~

*This talk is not annotated for publication. It is an adaptation of a talk first presented to the annual conference of the Germanna Foundation in July 2019, with the emphasis changed from the 1714 and 1717 Germanna colonies to the German and Scotch-Irish settlers of the Valley of Virginia. The sources for the information were the following volumes:*

James Horn, 1619: *Jamestown and the Forging of American Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 2018) 255 pages

This would be my top recommendation for covering the events of 1619

Peter C. Mancall, editor, *Tre Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*

(Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute Of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, 2007), 570 pages

- William M. Kelso, *Jamestown: The Buried Truth* (Charlottesville & London: The University of Virginia Press, 2006), 214 pages, wonderful illustrations
- William M. Kelso, *Jamestown: The Truth Revealed* (Charlottesville & London: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 251 pages
- Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 798 pages
- Charles Johnson, Patricia Smith, *Africans in America: America's Journey Through Slavery* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998)
- James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994)
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# “The Last Sale of a Slave in Virginia” Augusta’s Role in a Popular Story About the End of Slavery

By Tom Blair

*Editor’s Note: Tom Blair grew up in the Shenandoah Valley and currently lives in Arlington, Virginia. He works as an attorney in private practice in Washington, D.C.*

The beginning of slavery in Virginia is often linked to a single event. The arrival in August of 1619 of a ship, famously recorded by John Rolfe as a “Dutch Man of Warr” carrying “20. and odd Negroes,”<sup>1</sup> is a powerful image that has endured despite protests from historians that the truth is more complex. Indeed, in the past year marking the 400th anniversary of this event, Americans have focused like never before upon the fateful moment when this ship appeared on the horizon.<sup>2</sup>

The end of slavery in Virginia has no similar focal point. Because of the complicated geography of the Civil War, legal slavery ended in Virginia at different times in different places. No single event was “the” occasion when slavery died. For decades, earnest debates arose within the African-American community over the date for celebrating emancipation. The *Richmond Planet* observed on October 11, 1890, that “[t]here is quite a difference of opinion existing among our people as to the proper day to be observed.”<sup>3</sup> The suggested dates focused on military or political events that led to emancipation. These included the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation (September 22, 1863), the fall of Richmond (April 3, 1865), the surrender at Appomattox (April 9, 1865), and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment (December 6, 1865).

This paper will discuss a very different type of remembrance that appeared—with remarkable frequency—in newspapers outside of the African-American community. This popular story claimed to identify the final act of Virginia’s trade in human beings. Rather than recalling triumphant public events, it told a more prosaic tale. The details became twisted and confused over time, but one feature of the story remained consistent through the years.

The event was said to have taken place in Augusta County. More than twenty years after the Civil War, the *Chicago Times* ran an item about “the last sale of a slave in Virginia.” The story read as follows:

**Sold for a Hundred Cabbage Plants.** The last sale of a slave in Virginia took place in the spring of 1865. The facts were the following: The confederacy was on its very last legs, and the owner of a negro woman in Augusta, knowing that slavery would be ended in a few days, sold her for what he could get. As there was no circulating medium of any sort then – for nobody would take Confederate money at any value – the woman’s master bartered her for 100 cabbage plants.

In keeping with the journalistic practices of the era, this story was soon copied and pasted by other newspapers. Recent research has found evidence that this account was reprinted on more than twenty occasions between February and April, 1886. It appeared in multiple regions of the country. Surviving examples of its repetition can be found in newspapers in the North, South, Mid-West, and even the Dakota Territory.<sup>4</sup> Most of these papers repeated the story verbatim, with some of the southern papers adding the following addendum:

The purchaser got a day’s work out of the negro and considered that he had made a good trade, while the seller was satisfied.<sup>5</sup>

None of these articles cited the original source of this account. Likewise, none of the newspapers provided any context for the story or explained why it was being told over two decades after the war. It has become clear, however, that they were drawing upon a story that had circulated widely in the preceding decade.

On August 30, 1870, the *New York Herald* had printed a story entitled “The Last Slave Sold” that read as follows:

It may not be generally known that the last sale of a slave in the South occurred in Virginia. News had just reached the valley of the retreat of Lee’s army from Petersburg when a gentleman offered a slave to a farmer of Augusta County. After some higgling the bargain was closed by bartering the negro off for 100 cabbage plants.<sup>6</sup>

The *Herald* attributed the story to the *Norfolk Journal*. This item was picked up by many other papers and reprinted at least a dozen times in the ensuing weeks.<sup>7</sup> It continued to re-appear throughout the decade. In 1879, for instance, a very similar account could be found in numerous papers. When the *South-Western* of Shreveport, Louisiana, printed the story, it drew a reaction from the editor of the *Henderson Times* in Henderson, Texas, who disputed the claim that this incident was the last such sale in the South:

A little mistake about that – the last sale of a negro for a valuable consideration, so far as history shows, was those of a mulatto girl by Wm. Cox to Wm. Benson, residents of this place at that time. The sale was made seven days after the surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Department – the consideration five bales of cotton. Benson held this negro for three days, Cox his cotton a little longer. Both were gobbled up by government officials. Cox, however, held out for his cotton and in the general confusion found himself in jail at Shreveport for a very short time. He was released and, if our recollection serves us correctly, saved his cotton and sold it at a handsome price.<sup>8</sup>

Later in 1879, the story appeared yet again in an altered form. The cabbage plants in this telling became cabbage heads. This version of the story appeared in multiple newspapers:

The last slave sold in the Confederacy was in 1865, near Richmond, a negro man, who was bought for nine hundred heads of cabbage. The cabbages at that time were worth one dollar a head, which would pan out nine hundred dollars for the negro.<sup>9</sup>

In all of its forms, this story is difficult to read because it recalls the end of slavery by focusing on everything except the enslaved. It enumerates the cabbages. It describes the state of the currency. It calculates the economic value of the transaction, weighing whether it was a “good trade” that “satisfied” the buyer and seller. The human subject—described only as a “negro man” or a “negro woman”—receives less attention than the plants.

### **Sold for a Hundred Cabbage Plants.**

**The last sale of a slave in Virginia took place in the spring of 1865. The facts were the following: The confederacy was on its very last legs, and the owner of a negro woman in Augusta, knowing that slavery would be ended in a few days, sold her for what he could get. As there was no circulating medium of any sort then—for nobody would take Confederate money at any value—the woman’s master bartered her off for 100 cabbage plants.—Chicago Times.**

*Article from the Buchanan Record in Michigan on March 11, 1886.*

**THE LAST SLAVE SOLD.**—It may not be generally known that the last sale of a slave in the South occurred in Virginia. News had just reached the valley of the retreat of Lee's army from Petersburg, when a gentleman offered a slave to a farmer of Augusta county. After some higgling the bargain was closed by bartering the negro off for 100 cabbage plants.—*Norfolk Journal*,

*From The New York Herald, dated August 30, 1870.*

What explains the widespread popularity of this story? As an initial matter, it seems likely that editors were drawn to the strange-but-true aspect of the transaction ("sold for . . . cabbage plants") as an item that would grab the attention of their readers. In addition, the story had other elements that could explain its cross-sectional appeal. For readers in the North and Mid-West, the story could be read as supporting the view that southerners had stubbornly clung to their peculiar institution until the last possible moment when federal forces were on their doorstep. For readers in the South, the story could be read as supporting the view that emancipation was not a moment of liberation, but rather a chaotic change in the labor system that called upon resourceful citizens to make the best of the situation.

From the historian's perspective, these accounts published in the 1870s and 1880s do not seem very credible. The stories were not written until many years after the purported event. The narrative details varied widely over time and usually appeared in the "filler" columns of newspapers where entertainment, and not strict truth, was the primary goal. And, while this sale was said to have taken place in Augusta, no evidence has been found to date of this story appearing in any Shenandoah Valley source during its peak popularity in the 1870s and 1880s.

These circumstances raise the possibility that the event did not actually happen. Maybe, in reality, no African-American man or woman in Augusta was subjected to this experience. Perhaps slavery ended in Virginia without this grotesque last gasp.

Recent research, however, suggests a more troubling possibility. This research has located an account that appeared in the *Old Commonwealth*, a newspaper in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The item appeared on January 31, 1866:

**The Last Sale of Negroes in the Valley.** — We have been informed by a gentleman residing in Augusta County, that the last sale of negroes in the Valley was made by a gentleman of Staunton, April 7th, 1865. He sold two negro children, age 10 years and 12 years, for 5000 cabbage plants.



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THE LAST SALE OF NEGROES IN THE VALLEY.—We have been informed by a gentleman residing in Augusta County, that the last sale of negroes in the Valley was made by a gentleman of Staunton, April 7th, 1865. He sold two negro children, aged 9 years and 12 years, for 5000 cabbage plants.

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*The Old Commonwealth, January 31, 1866.*

This version carries indications of being the original account. It identifies its source not as another newspaper, but as a direct informant residing in Augusta. *The Old Commonwealth* was published only twenty-five miles from Staunton and this item appeared only nine months after the event being described. It makes a less grandiose claim than later accounts, limiting itself to asserting that the sale was the last in the Shenandoah Valley. Moreover, this version includes details that are not found elsewhere. It provides an exact date (April 7), identifies the seller (a gentleman of Staunton), and describes the number of cabbage plants (5,000) as far greater than in other accounts. Most disturbingly, it states that the “last sale” involved children who were only 10 and 12 years of age.

These details make it more difficult to dismiss this story as an obvious fiction. The date of April 7, 1865, would have been two days before Appomattox when the fate of Lee’s army would not have been known in Augusta. The first week of April would have been the time of year when county farmers would have been selling cabbage plants.<sup>10</sup> Based on the 1860 slaveholder census, it appears that multiple households in Staunton would have included two or more enslaved children whose ages would have been approximately ten and twelve by 1865.

This account was repeated, in a slightly abbreviated form, by Staunton’s *Valley Virginian* on February 7, 1866.<sup>11</sup> The fact that the story was published—apparently without contradiction—in the place where the event reportedly occurred may be suggestive.

Ultimately, though, this story cannot be fully corroborated by currently available sources. Moreover, if the account is true, it raises more questions than it answers. Why would anyone have engaged in this type of transaction at such a time? Considering the ages of the children, it seems

unlikely that the motive was to obtain “a day’s work.” More importantly, who were these children and what were their circumstances? How were they affected by being sold off to a new master when they were on the verge of freedom? What became of them in the turmoil of 1865 and the hard years that followed?

The goal of this paper is to invite further research in the hope that answers can be found to the questions surrounding this story. Someday, perhaps, we will know whether the evil chapter that began with a ship on Virginia’s eastern horizon in 1619 ended with this “last sale” on its western border in 1865.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Letter from John Rolfe to Sir Edwin Sandys, 1619/1620, Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 3:244.

<sup>2</sup>In August of 2019, the cover of *The New York Times Magazine* featured a somber photograph of the coastal waters near Old Point Comfort. The accompanying caption read as follows: “In August of 1619, a ship appeared on this horizon . . . It carried more than 20 enslaved Africans, who were sold to the colonists. America was not yet America, but this is the moment when it began. No aspect of the country that would be formed here has been untouched by the 250 years of slavery that followed.” *New York Times Magazine*, Aug. 18, 2019.

<sup>3</sup>“The Emancipation Celebration,” *Richmond Planet*, p. 1, col. 1, Oct. 11, 1890.

<sup>4</sup>*Indianapolis Evening News*, Feb. 13, 1886, p. 2, col. 3; *New Philadelphia* (Ohio) *Times*, Feb. 18, 1886, p. 1, col. 2; *Columbus* (Indiana) *Herald*, Feb. 27, 1886, p. 1, col. 1; *Critic* (Logansport, Indiana), Feb. 28, 1886, p. 8, col. 4; *Plainville* (Kansas) *Times*, March 4, 1886, p. 7, col. 4; *Echo-Advocate* (Coldwater, Kansas), March 4, 1886, p. 2, col. 2; *The Sunflower* (Reece, Kansas), March 6, 1886, p. 2, col. 3; *Daily Iowa Capital* (Des Moines, Iowa), March 10, 1886, Evening Edition, p. 2, col. 2; *Southern Herald* (Liberty, Mississippi), March 10, 1886, p. 2, col. 6; *Morning Sun* (Iowa) *Herald*, March 11, 1886, p. 7, col. 3; *Buchanan* (Michigan) *Record*, March 11, 1886, p. 2, col. 4; *Marshfield* (Wisconsin) *Times*, March 12, 1886, p. 2, col. 8; *Graham* (Texas) *Leader*, March 18, 1886, p. 3, col. 3; *Wellsville* (New York) *Daily Reporter*, March 19, 1886, p. 2, col. 4; *Mitchell* (Dakota Terr.) *Daily Republican*, March 24, 1886, p. 4, col. 2; *Southern Herald* (Liberty, Miss.), p. 2, col. 6; *Titusville* (Pennsylvania) *Herald*, April 12, 1886, p. 3, col. 4; *Sandersville* (Georgia) *Herald*, April 15, 1886, p. 8, col. 4; *Chariton* (Iowa) *Democrat*, July 8, 1886, p. 4, col. 2.

<sup>5</sup>*Athens* (Georgia) *Banner Herald*, Feb. 16, 1886, p. 2, col. 1; *The Times and Democrat* (Orangeburg, South Carolina), Feb. 18, 1886, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>6</sup>*New York Herald*, Aug. 30, 1870, p. 5, col. 3.

<sup>7</sup>*Indianapolis Evening News*, Aug. 25, 1870, p. 2, col. 3; *New York Herald*, Aug. 30, 1870, p. 5, col. 3; *Charlotte Democrat*, Aug. 30, 1870, p. 4, col. 4; *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, Sept. 1, 1870, p. 2, col. 3; *Daily Milwaukee News*, Sept. 1, 1870, p. 4, col. 1; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept. 5, 1870, p. 5, col. 8; *Bloomington Daily Leader*, Sept. 7, 1870, p. 1, col. 4; *Terre Haute Weekly Express*, Sept. 7, 1870, p. 5, col. 6; *Platte County* (Missouri) *Reveille*, Sept. 9, 1870, p. 1, col. 5; *Lafayette Advertiser* (Vermilionville, La), Sept. 10, 1870, p. 1, col. 6; *Gallipolis Journal*, Sept. 15, 1870, p. 1, col. 8; *The Bolivar* (Tenn.) *Bulletin*, Sept. 21, 1879, p. 1, col. 4; *Sandusky Daily Register*, Sept. 21, 1870, p. 2, col. 3; *The Macomb* (Illinois) *Journal*, p. 1, col. 3; *The Albany* (Ore.) *Register*, Sept. 24, 1870, p. 1, col. 6; *Richmond* (Indiana) *Palladium*, Sept. 24, 1870, p. 4, col. 2; *The Historical Magazine*, Vol IX, No. 1 (Jan. 1871 issue).

<sup>8</sup>*The South-Western* (Shreveport, La), Sept. 28, 1879, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>9</sup>*Columbus* (Ga.) *Daily Enquirer-Sun*, June 18, 1879, p. 1, col. 5; *The Mandan Criterion* (Dakota Terr.), July 5, 1879, p. 4, col. 2; *The Newtown Bee*, Sept. 3, 1879, p. 2, col. 3.

<sup>10</sup>In 1866, for example, the March 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Staunton Spectator* carried an advertisement offering “Early York Cabbage” plants for sale at “Mr. Wm. H. Peyton’s farm, near Staunton.” *Staunton Spectator*, March 27, 1866, p. 2, col. 5.

<sup>11</sup>*Valley Virginian*, Feb. 7, 1866, p. 3, col. 1. The story also appeared in several other papers during early 1866. *Baltimore Daily Commercial*, Feb. 9, 1866, p. 1, col. 4; *Delaware* (Ohio) *Gazette*, Feb. 23, 1866, p. 2, col. 7; *Daily Milwaukee News*, March 7, 1866, p. 4, col. 5; *Georgia Weekly Telegraph* (Macon, Ga.), March 26, 1866, p. 4, col. 5.

# Forgotten in Plain Sight

By Cheryl Lyon

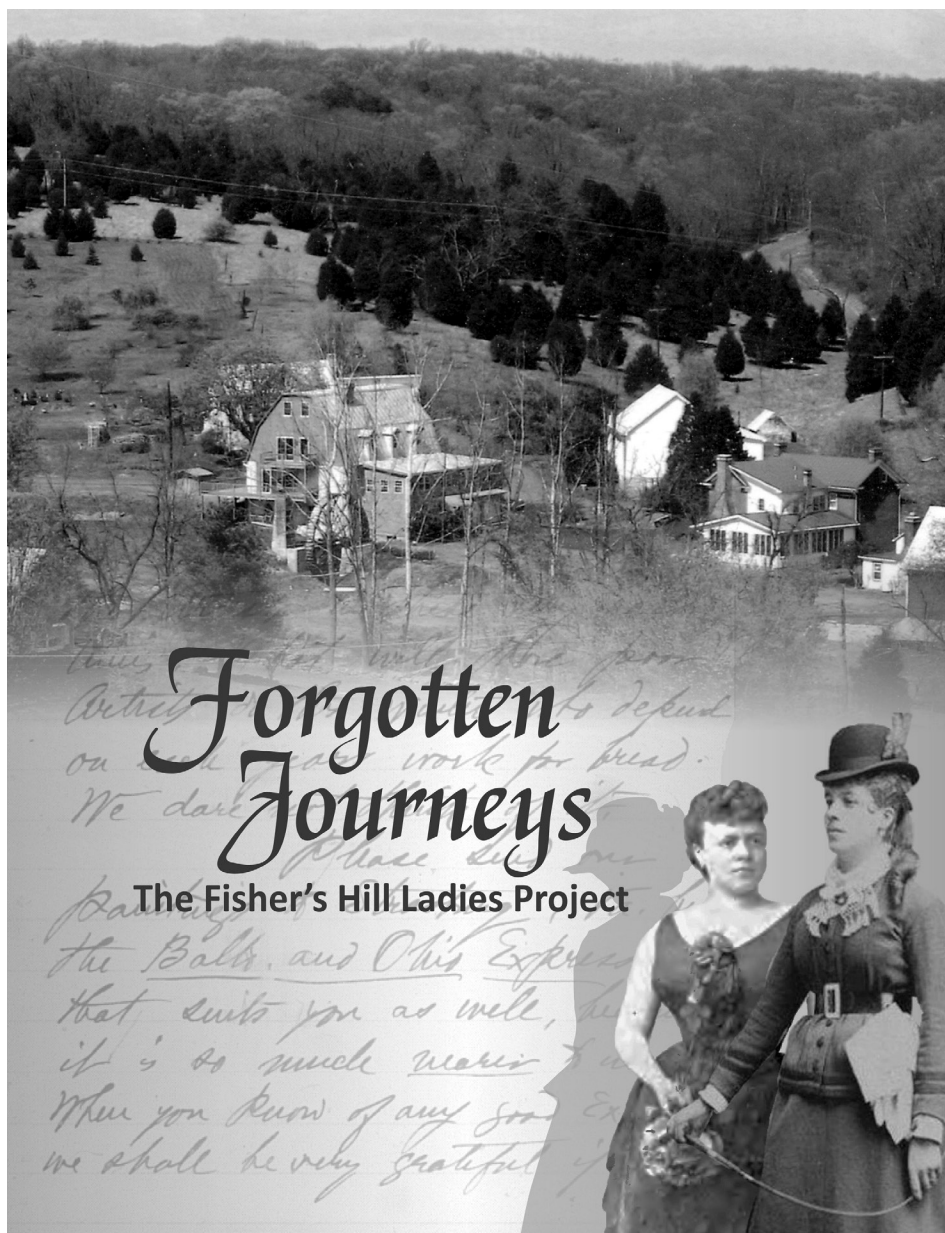
*Editor's note: When local historian and artist Cheryl Lyon of Dayton, Virginia, approached us about the relevance of this article for the Bulletin, we were intrigued. After reading the essay, we are glad we accepted the submission. Not only are there continuous ties and connections between these three women, who have almost been forgotten by history, and the Staunton area, but their story is particularly relevant as we celebrate the centennial of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote.*

At 12:40 a.m., Bertha Von Hillern was pronounced dead by Dr. J. F. Fulton, a staff physician at Western State Hospital in Staunton.<sup>1</sup> It was the first of five deaths that would occur there September 20, 1939, a warm and cloudy autumn day laced with showers. Hospital staff buried her the same day in the hospital's cemetery, likely using a cardboard box as a coffin.<sup>2</sup> Von Hillern had no known relatives and no known surviving friends, yet she had spent decades firing the public's imagination, enjoying name recognition throughout the world – from the largest, grandest cities to the tiniest villages.

Her passing was unnoticed. Von Hillern and her two best friends had been forgotten in plain sight. An extraordinary wealth of detail has been uncovered about Von Hillern's professional life and the lives of her friends, creating a captivating – and incredibly sad – story of three lives. Increasing focus on women's struggles has come with the 2020 centennial of women's right to vote in the United States. More attention is being paid to women in history; they often struggled in sports, in the arts, and across all spectrums of activity. Von Hillern and her friends were among those who endeavored to excel in a culture that often rebuffed them.

## **Walking fast into the heart of America**

Rewind Von Hillern's story sixty-five years from her 1939 death in Staunton to about 1874 or 1875, when she was probably seventeen years old and had just emigrated from Germany. As she was arriving in America, the sport of pedestrianism – fast walking – was enjoying dramatically increased attention with Dan O'Leary and Edward Payson Weston competing in venues across the U.S.<sup>3</sup> It was against this backdrop that Bertha Von Hillern began her walking career – most sports researchers crediting her with popularizing pedestrianism for women.<sup>4</sup>



A composite image about the women of the article. The village of Fisher's Hill in northwest Shenandoah County, Virginia, was home to Bertha Von Hillern, Maria a'Becket, and Emma Howard Wight during the decade of the 1880s.

The *Chicago Daily Tribune's* sports page announced a challenge by Bertha on December 19, 1875<sup>5</sup>: "Fraulein Bertha Von Hillern has arrived in Chicago...The plucky young Fraulein challenges the world to a walk, and forfeits a goodly number of ducats [gold coins] if she does not make good her claims to precedence as a female walker." Another article about pedestrianism on the same page printed her challenge in full:

I, Bertha Von Hillern, hereby announce my intention to exhibit my powers as a pedestrian, some time within a month, in a contest, in this city, for the championship of the world, with any woman of unblemished character who may wish to enter the lists against me; said contest to continue through five consecutive days, and I pledge myself to pay over to her, in case she should make the greater distance, the sum of \$500. An answer will reach me addressed to the care of The Tribune Office.

Von Hillern's challenge was accepted by a financially desperate widowed mother, Tryphena Curtis, who chose the name May Marshall as her professional moniker.<sup>6</sup> The Chicago race began on January 31, 1876, and was a six-day race for three hundred miles around a quarter-mile track in the Second Regiment Armory.<sup>7</sup> It ended prematurely when both women were physically unable to continue – May Marshall because of badly blistered feet and Bertha Von Hillern because she could not breathe in the

*No photograph of Maria a'Becket has been found; this only known photograph of Emma Howard Wight is from Frances Willard's book, A Woman of the Century; Bertha Von Hillern, taken from a promotional cabinet card. The "whip" in the photo was given to her by the "Women of Boston."*

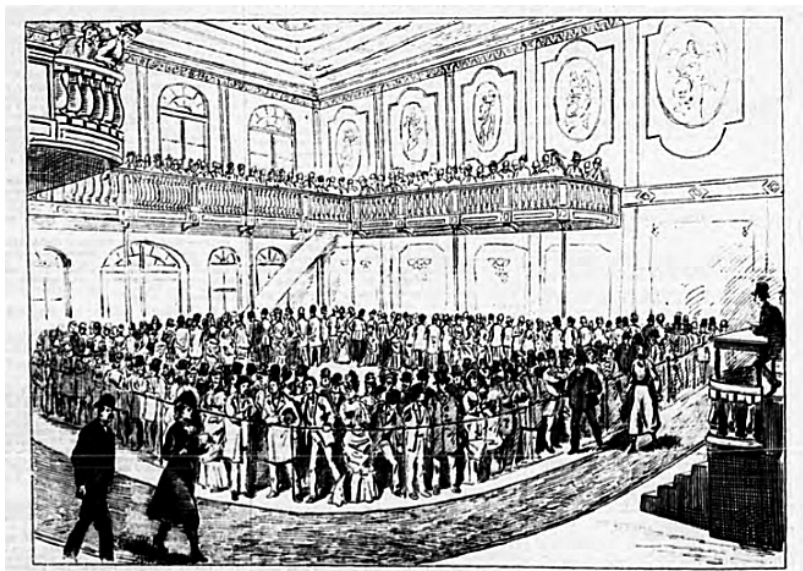




armory filled with patrons' tobacco smoke.<sup>8</sup> A new challenge was quickly issued by Bertha, and a rematch was set for New York City on November 5, 1876.<sup>9</sup> In the meantime, other women immediately jumped into the fray according to many newspaper reports. Von Hillern easily won her second contest with May and captured national acclaim for her efforts.

Sadly, pedestrianism quickly devolved into a carnival-like atmosphere for both the male and female athletes. It is believed to be the first sport where the two sexes sometimes competed against each other, and some researchers claim it also is a sport that spawned extensive gambling.<sup>10</sup>

Less than a year after her matches with May Marshall, Bertha Von Hillern took the proverbial "high road." A devout Catholic, Bertha was both concerned about her reputation, and she wanted to focus on teaching American women how to be physically fit.<sup>11</sup> She began "exhibition" walks throughout the United States, where she announced her goal for time and distance and sold tickets to watch her. Typical shows were 350 miles in six days (no walking on Sunday), 100 miles in 28 hours, or 88 miles in 24 hours. "New England suffragists supported and profited from Von



*Tracks were set up in auditoriums, music halls, and other large buildings, all carefully measured to be a quarter mile. Shown here is Bertha Von Hillern's second match with May Marshall in 1876 held in New York City's Central Park Garden. Von Hillern is on the left walking counter-clockwise on the outside of the track with her business manager by her side. May Marshall is on the right, walking clockwise on the inside position. Engraving is from the July 9, 1876 New York Daily Graphic.*





*Bertha Von Hillern walked many times in the Boston Music Hall shown here. Bands played around the clock and patrons cheered her on from the galleries, typical arrangements for the pedestrian sports. Admission was normally fifty cents per person, and thousands were often on hand.*

Hillern's solo exhibitions, making her a symbol of women's capabilities. The leading women's suffrage newspaper *Woman's Journal* included four articles about Von Hillern from December 1876 to March 1877," wrote author Dahn Shaulis in a *Journal of Sport History* article.<sup>12</sup>

Von Hillern used the opportunities to advocate for healthy eating and exercise by women. She hired D. S. Thomas to be her business manager; he had served as the highly-respected press agent for showman P.T. Barnum.<sup>13</sup> Exhibition walking, though lacking the excitement of competing against another athlete, still packed her venues with paying customers, although physicians and clergymen debated the health and morality of such physical exercise for women.<sup>14</sup> Decades later, during the heat of the suffrage movement, Bertha's example was still respected by both sides and continued to be debated.<sup>15</sup>

On February 14, 1878, Von Hillern was finishing up an exhibition in Washington, D.C., and the *Buffalo (NY) Express* described it well:

The band played “Hold the Fort” and “Swallows Homeward Fly,” and in eleven minutes, she came in, with deep-set eyes and a slight pallor of fatigue and sleeplessness, successful. A crown of flowers were put on her head, and she slowly walked around the hall. The excitement during the last mile was intense; ladies sprang to their feet with excited faces, and waved their handkerchiefs until the hall was a forest of fluttering cheers. Mrs. Spencer waved her cambric, and the Senator clapped his hands and shook the building with his heeltaps. Gen. Belknap whirled his beaver above his gray head and hurrahed lustily on her last circuit. A dear old lady near me, an acknowledged society leader, threw her great fur cloak from her arms to the floor that she might wave a handkerchief with one hand and dry her excited tears with the other. Her fears that little Bertha might faint, stumble, or only be able to stagger the last mile, made her terribly anxious. The even, steady swing over the noiseless sawdust was kept with as much ease through the last miles as in the earlier ones, and her firmly shut mouth and intent air showed that for pure determination and ... pluck, she has no equal. A fashionable audience in such a high state of excitement one never sees, and Bertha has conquered Washington, as she did strait-laced, sober-minded old Boston.<sup>16</sup>

Reading through newspapers and magazines of the era, it is clear that Von Hillern captured the hearts of many. By taking the “high road” she succeeded in setting an example of what women were capable of becoming. Emma Jones, a Washington correspondent who saw Bertha von Hillern in her recent one hundred mile walk, said, “Bertha has taught us all what a terrible waste of strength our large skirts are, and I for one felt like cutting off all my abominable trains the moment I got home. On second thought, I have decided to postpone it till the society season is over. Thus we still hug our chains – but oh! For the happy freedom of a von Hillern skirt and the unfettered von Hillern legs.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Fulfilling her lifelong dream**

In May 1878, Bertha Von Hillern retired from the cinder track and took her saved “winnings” of \$8,000 to Boston, where she could learn to become a landscape painter.<sup>18</sup> While she continued writing in newspapers and magazines about the importance of exercise for women, her new daily focus dramatically shifted to art. She initially studied sculpture with the renowned Truman H. Bartlett,<sup>19</sup> then anatomy with Dr. William T. Rimmer, a Boston physician and artist whose 1877 book on art anatomy was the most comprehensive published to date. It also was the first anatomy book to incorporate Darwinian theories of evolution.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Rimmer had spent four years as director of the School of Design for Women at the Cooper Institute in New York. Both of these instructors were in the world of William Morris Hunt, the honored Barbizon painter who also kept company with Ralph

Waldo Emerson, James Russell Lowell, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, some of the greatest writers, poets and philosophers in America. Hunt was reportedly one of the few artists in the United States willing to teach women.<sup>21</sup>

It was while she was under the tutelage of William Morris Hunt that Bertha Von Hillern met Maria a'Becket, a native of Portland, Maine. About fifteen years older than Von Hillern, Becket had studied under Hunt before sailing to France where she lived with the family of famed Barbizon artist Charles Daubigny and spent each day painting with him on the Oise River. She had also studied painting in Italy and Germany.<sup>22</sup>

William Morris Hunt and Dr. Rimmer both died in 1879, about eighteen months after Von Hillern began her art studies, and a'Becket seemed to take on the role of artistic mentor in her friendship with Von Hillern. Months later, the two women established a Summer Studio in 1880 near Fisher's Hill, Virginia, a tiny hamlet in northwestern Shenandoah County.<sup>23</sup> Withdrawing to the rugged forests for inspiration was consistent with the Barbizon Movement in art. Beginning in nineteenth-century France, Barbizon artists would journey to the Forest of Fontainebleau where "[The forest] spreads across 42,000 acres of dense woods undercut with meadows, marshes, gorges, and sandy clearings... painters typically forayed into the nearby forest in warm weather and retreated to Parisian studios in winter."<sup>24</sup> Painting the outdoors and the countryside were central themes for the Barbizon artists, named for the small village of Barbizon, France. Maria a'Becket's instructor in France, Charles Daubigny, was considered one of the most accomplished artists in the naturalist movement.

Von Hillern and a'Becket settled into a pattern of painting about eight months of the year in their Summer Studio at Fisher's Hill, then returning to the salons of Boston during harsh winter months where they would exhibit and sell their art. Their "wintering over" was often done at the Hotel Vendome in Boston;<sup>25</sup> they lived at the hotel and offered their paintings for sale in a gallery space at the same establishment. It was a popular *modus operandi* for artists of that era.

Their daily lives at Fisher's Hill were detailed in a December 17, 1884, article in *The Staunton Spectator*, an article that had been shared by a New York publication, the *American Queen*. The 1884 article about the Summer Studio in the *Spectator* was so detailed that it confirmed the house where the ladies rented space on the second floor and ultimately led to the discovery of two paintings by Bertha Von Hillern that had been passed down through the farm's ownership over more than 100 years.

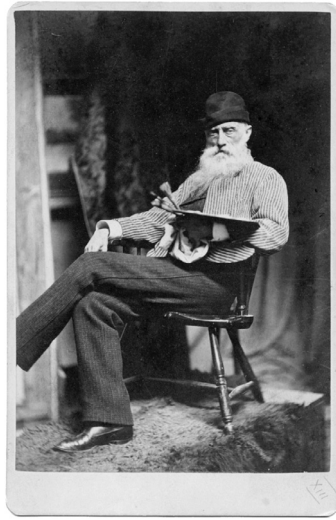


*Front view of the Barb House west of Fisher's Hill and near the Back Road running along Little North Mountain. The ladies rented a second floor room along the left side. The small building behind and to the left is the site of the farm building that served as the famous Summer Studio. Von Hillern and a'Becket lived and painted here eight months of the year and lived in Boston four months, where they sold their paintings. The ladies walked nine miles a day roundtrip to the post office and twenty-two miles roundtrip on Sunday mornings to attend Mass.*



*This is the site of the Summer Studio for Bertha Von Hillern and Maria a'Becket. Tumbling Run flows on the right. The original studio building was replaced some years ago. From the studio, the ladies hiked all over the countryside making sketches and painting in the oak forests.*





*William Morris Hunt (right) trained both Bertha Von Hillern and Maria a'Becket in the Barbizon style for landscape art. Hunt was one of a very few artists in the United States willing to teach women how to paint. (Courtesy Smithsonian Institution) Maria a'Becket sailed to France and convinced Charles Daubigny (left) to train her in the Barbizon style; Daubigny was considered a master of the style. While there, Maria lived with the Daubigny family and spent her days painting with Daubigny in his boat on the Oise River.*

The editor of the *American Queen*, Mary Helen Ferguson, clearly had made a personal visit to the Summer Studio in light of the details she included in her story. She also seemed to enjoy a professional friendship with Richard Mauzy, the editor and owner of the *Spectator* during that period of the early and mid-1880s. The connection between the two editors has not been discovered. Mary Helen died in 1886 when she was just twenty-five, and Bertha Von Hillern wrote an extensive obituary specifically for *The Staunton Spectator*.<sup>26</sup> Eighteen months after Mary Helen's passing, newspaper accounts noted that Bertha was still wearing deep mourning clothes in honor of her friend.<sup>27</sup>

The years 1880 to 1886 were characterized for Von Hillern and a'Becket by the seasonal pattern of traveling between the Summer Studio and Boston, with each year punctuated by their paintings being accepted in some of the best art shows in the United States. Von Hillern masterfully built wood crates in the Summer Studio for shipping the paintings, and the ladies would cart them a few miles to Strasburg or Fisher's Hill for shipping by rail.<sup>28</sup>

Bertha Von Hillern had paintings accepted for exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, and a drawing in

*An 1887 issue of the Staunton Spectator reported that Col. Albert Pope purchased Bertha Von Hillern's painting titled "Summer Day at Grand Menan." Pope had established a bicycle factory when he came away enthused about the new machine at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. He also started an electric car factory in 1897.*



*Von Hillern and a'Becket lived here during the winter months and sold their paintings in an on-site gallery. An 1889 newspaper report by Wight said the hotel had recently added paintings by Von Hillern and a'Becket; Von Hillern's was likely a large mural. In 1971, the hotel burned to the ground.*



## A VIRGINIA STUDIO.

THE SUMMER HOME OF THE PAINTERS, MISS MARIA J. C. BECKET AND MISS BERTHA VON HILLERN.

This utter isolation from the world.

Tal- grand companionship with mountain heights.

Between whose summits drifting, trailing clouds

Pass, like white messengers with secret tidings

And greetings, each to each, demand the best

The human heart can offer of itself.

Nature, great-hearted mother, draws me close,

Whispers her consolations, from my heart

Drives all its petty worldliness, and breathes

Thereon a great, all-satisfying peace.

The mountain top shall be my place of rest,

Perchance my spirit, cleansed and purified

By this aloofness from the world of men,

This nearness of the world of heaven's stars,

May here forget the bustle and the strife,

The greedy, soulless turmoil of men's lives.

—GEORGE ARTHUR DENISON.

Strasburg, Virginia, situated in Shenandoah county, on the line of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, is one of the quaintest and most truly typical of Virginia villages. It is located in one of the loveliest and picturesque portions of the far-famed Shenandoah Valley, and is surrounded by historic ground. The battles of Fisher Hill and Cedar Creek were fought within a short distance of the town itself, and near by is the hill from which Sheridan started on his famous ride.

The country around Strasburg is unusually beautiful, especially at this time of the year, when the fine-wooded heights take on in swift transition the most gorgeous and exquisite tints beneath the clear blue sky or the trailing shadows of the more sombre autumn clouds. Indescribably handsome are the fall tints, and there is something very satisfying to lovers of color in the rich and varying hues of the mountains at this season. Mountains and hills rise on every side of the little town; the peaceful and gentle Shenandoah runs by its side, and the whole atmosphere of the place is suggestive of nothing so much as repose. The roads leading out from Strasburg are rocky, narrow and wild, and are often bordered by woods of fine old trees. The farm-houses are quaint, often hand-ome buildings, situated far apart in the straggling untidiness characteristic of everything Virginian, among the lonely, beautiful hills.

One of these farm-houses, situated nearly five miles from the village, is noted throughout the valley as being the home, during eight months of the year, of the two, well-known painters, Miss Maria J. C. Becket and Miss Bertha Von Hillern, whose work and the story of whose friendship is already familiar to the public.

The farm-house where they have their studio is a handsome square brick structure, situated on what is known as the "North Mountains," in one of the wildest and most charming spots in all the Shenandoah Valley. The road leading to it from the village is narrow, very hilly and affords many glimpses of attractive scenery. The house itself is surrounded by ground of historic interest. Several unimportant battles and skirmishes occurred within a stone's throw of it during the late war, and here the poor dying soldiers of both armies were frequently brought. The people who own it are simple, kindly and hospitable, and have many thrilling tales to tell of the war and the incidents connected with it in that vicinity. Here, shut in among these beautiful hills in old Virginia, Miss Becket and Miss Von Hillern live and work during the long summer and fall months.

Their studio was formerly one of the out-buildings of the farm. It is a little very grey wooden building, lovely in tone and color, and picturesquely enough situated to charm the heart of the most critical artist. In front of the studio is a sturdy apple tree, behind it runs a musical spring, and from its windows may be seen the mountains, a range of the Blue Ridge, painted a pale soft blue upon the still more misty blue of the distant sky. Behind the studio are handsome woods alive with feathered creatures, blue, scarlet and golden, darting from tree to tree, or rushing with their songs through the upper air. Flowers, as radiant as they are scentless, strew the bare earth or break into blossom overhead. The studio is so unlike the conventional studio, and so like an ideal studio that it possesses an indefinable charm. Its very simplicity and rudeness make it attractive. It contains but one room, is well lighted, sunny, and is kept in most beautiful order. Not a picture or a paint brush is allowed to be out of its proper place. The walls are hung with paintings, some finished and some unfinished, and around the room are canvasses on easels upon which the artists are now engaged. One side of the studio, opposite the door, is fitted up as a carpenter shop, with well-made drawers and shelves, in which are stowed away a complete set of carpenter's tools, boards, and all the materials and implements necessary for the manufac-

ture of cases in which to send away pictures to exhibitions, etc. Miss Von Hillern does all the carpentering, and very deftly and gracefully she handles the tools. She has a carpenter's bench in front of the studio, and here, during the long summer days when she is not painting, or off in the woods or down by the river sketching, she saws her planks and measures her pictures, and makes her boxes with all the skill and ease of a professional carpenter. She is the neatest and most precise creature about her work that one can imagine, and her boxes, in which she ships all the pictures, are really works of art when completed. Not a bit of wood or a corner is left unplanned or unfinished, and not a nail is out of place.

Both Miss Von Hillern and Miss Becket dress simply while at their work. They wear dark blue flannel dresses, made with plain skirts and blouse waists. Stout broad-soled boots cover their feet, and great broad-brimmed straw hats their heads. They make an admirable picture as they go about their work. This is the only costume they wear during their stay in their wilderness, except when they walk to town, when they change their hats for something less picturesque than their "big bloomers."

The constant walking "to town" of these two artists is the wonder of all the country people around. Their mail, etc., comes and goes from Strasburg, of course, and all their business has to be transacted from that town, and as they generally have a great deal of correspondence, etc., walk into town frequently. It is nine miles from their studio and back, and when they have a great deal of business on hand they frequently go in twice a day. This makes eighteen miles walking over the roughest, wildest roads, up-hill and down-hill, over stones, across little bridges and fences and creeks, and runs and rills and many other obstacles. Both artists possess a tremendous amount of endurance, and look upon a walk of eighteen miles as a mere nothing. They can repeat these walks day after day and do all their painting and other work besides, and then not feel very tired. They keep up a wonderful flow of spirits and lead the most happy, healthful, busy lives down in their wilderness that one can well imagine.

It cannot help being a source of considerable wonder to most people, how two women, accustomed to the delights and refinements of cultured society (especially Bostonian,) can spend eight months out of the twelve down in these Virginia mountains, away from all congenial society. It certainly is a great and strong proof that they truly love their art. Here they have found, during the four seasons they have spent in

their "wilderness," materials for many of their finest paintings. Nowhere in all America can handsomer woods be found than in this portion of Virginia, and when these artists get among handsome woods they are "in their glory," to speak in popular Virginian phraseology. Miss Von Hillern has a passion for woods, a love for trees, and the seemingly inanimate things of the forest, that is unusually beautiful and touching to see. She is perfectly at home in the forests, and will sit silently for hours studying the trees, or will dart like a bird

through the woods in search of some new development in their form or color. Some of her most notable paintings, among them "St. Meinrad and his Crows," "The Monk Felix," and the large canvas which adorns the walls of the Carrollton Hotel at Baltimore, have been taken from the woods around their studio. All these pictures are master-pieces, and cannot fail to live as examples of wood-painting rarely, if ever, excelled. There is strength, poetry, beauty and naturalness about every tree Miss Von Hillern paints. She is now engaged on several large and important pictures which will be exhibited this winter.

Miss Becket, as a usual thing, does not attempt such massive treatment in her pictures as does Miss Von Hillern. All of her paintings afford a delightful glimpse of nature. She is at present at work upon several wood scenes that give promise of being gems when completed, and she has recently finished a picture affording a glimpse of one of the most charming portions of the picturesque Shenandoah. Miss Becket has also been at work upon a number of charcoal sketches, which will doubtless grace some of the exhibitions this winter.

These artists together accomplish as much work, and paint as many pictures in a year, as do any other dozen artists in the country put together. The amount they manage to get through with is simply astonishing.—Both are indefatigable. They attend to all their own business affairs, their duties being about equally divided. They both possess an aptitude for business very uncommon among women, and especially among artists. To this faculty as well as to their genius for painting is due much of the gratifying success with which they have met during the four years they have been associated together. The exhibitions which they hold every year in Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, which have been so novel and successful, are entirely managed by them. Every little detail in all their business arrangements is attended to with the greatest precision and dispatch.

*Published in the Staunton Spectator December 17, 1884, this article describes the Summer Studio at Fisher's Hill in great detail. The information helped to identify the house where they rented rooms and the outbuilding for their studio. It also paints a delightful image of the daily lives of Von Hillern and a'Becket.*



1885.<sup>29</sup> Most of them were rural Shenandoah Valley scenes, reflecting her Barbizon training and preferences. The images carried titles such as "Sycamore Tree on the Shenandoah River," "Evening Study of an Old Oak, North Mountain," "Old Oak, Virginia Pasture," "Woods on the Battle Ground of Cedar Creek," and "Late Afternoon in the Valley of the Shenandoah."

Maria a'Becket, the more experienced artist and Von Hillern's friend and mentor, was just as successful, exhibiting at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1880, 1882, 1883, and 1884. A'Becket also enjoyed representation at the highly respected Pennsylvania Academy of Fine arts in many of those same years.

The year 1884 was especially rewarding when both women had works accepted at the 1884 World's Fair, known as the Southern Exposition in Louisville, Kentucky. Correspondence and rail shipping receipts are in collections at the Smithsonian Institution. In sending information to be included in the Fair's catalog, a'Becket touchingly wrote, "If there is any question of space, please give the most to Miss von Hillern, even if you leave mine out entirely."<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, Von Hillern's painting titled, "Kitchen Interior" has been lost to time, and the whereabouts of a'Becket's painting titled, "On the Border of the Forest, Front Royal, Va." also is unknown. In 1884, Von Hillern also had a series of paintings accepted for exhibition at the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington, D.C.<sup>31</sup>

Other venues for the display of their art included the famous American Art Galleries in New York City, Williams & Everett Gallery in Boston, the Haseltine Galleries in Philadelphia, and the renowned National Academy of Design, where it was reported that Von Hillern was awarded a coveted gold medal for her submission.<sup>32</sup> Both women also had work selected for the New Orleans World's Industrial & Cotton Exhibition,<sup>33</sup> and both women were also successful in selling their art. In 1884, Von Hillern was reported as selling a painting for two thousand dollars,<sup>34</sup> equivalent to more than \$50,000 today.

Newspaper accounts and mentions about the two ladies appeared throughout the United States in big cities and far-flung rural communities. Von Hillern's name, especially, was recognized in almost every household. In August 1885, *Manford's Magazine* carried articles with titles like "Why Women Ought to Vote" and "Women's Suffrage in Ohio." Also included in that issue was a resounding affirmation of both Bertha and Maria:

One of the most remarkable women who labor at the easel in the United States is Miss Bertha von Hillern. Miss von Hillern has lived a life of



*The Summer Studio is at the left and the rear of the Barb House is shown in the center. This is one of two paintings passed down through the owners of the farm. Owners were not aware that the painters had lived there. This, as well as the other painting identified, are in a private collection.*



*Drawing of the Summer Studio by Bertha Von Hillern. Used on the cover of the 1884 Exhibition & Private Sale Catalog for the Williams & Everett Gallery in Boston. Retrieved from archive.org.*



Von Hillern's walking skills had not been lost after she started studying art. During the months at Fisher's Hill each year, the ladies made daily nine-mile walks to the post office – sometimes even twice in one day. Devout Catholics, they walked to church at Woodstock and possibly Front Royal – a twenty-two-mile roundtrip to either town. Occasionally, a visiting priest would arrive by train at Strasburg and conduct mass in a nearby Catholic home. "They are both devout, and unlike the majority of poor humanity, put into practice the noble precepts of true religion. Every night they have prayers together, and on Sundays when they cannot attend mass, [they] read mass and vespers," noted an article in the *Staunton Spectator*.<sup>35</sup>

A'Becket, born in Portland, Maine, was the daughter of a druggist (who was also a talented artist) and apparently mastered the art of natural medicines, sharing her knowledge with Von Hillern and the Fisher's Hill community. The Staunton newspaper gave this description:

Busy as their lives are with their own work, they still find time to devote to helping others. Miss Becket has given medicine a thorough study, and has traveled so extensively and has come in contact with so many different classes of men and women that her knowledge of the human body and human mind is very complete. It is touching to see the confidence that her patients have in her. Sunday is the day upon which they come to be doctored. They come, sometimes, long distances on foot, say from five to twelve miles, and fill the broad hall and the portico of the farmhouse. Miss Becket and Miss Von Hillern have both a hearty, healthful way of looking at their poor peoples' diseases and troubles, and their influence for doing them good and for helping them seems unbounded. Everybody knows them for miles around, and they are called the 'doctor,' the 'painters,' or the 'ladies,' and are loved and greatly respected.<sup>36</sup>

Von Hillern and a'Becket also traveled outside their routine circuit and sought artistic inspiration in other settings. In 1885, Von Hillern spent the summer at the grand resort area of Saratoga Springs, New York. Von Hillern, a'Becket, and Mary Helen Ferguson spent the first six months of 1886 in Florida together, just before Mary Helen's untimely passing. The two painters were making sketches throughout their stay that would be used for later paintings. With a friend from Milwaukee, Von Hillern traveled to California for three months in 1887,<sup>37</sup> making sketches of the western landscapes, her presence there being reported by newspapers across the country.

### **One forsakes the wilderness**

By 1888, the Summer Studio at Fisher's Hill no longer seemed to capture a'Becket's imagination, and she went to New York City where





*"The Storm," a painting by Maria a'Becket, was selected to be hung in the Rotunda of the Woman's Building at the exposition. It was the first time that women had been given the opportunity to showcase their work at a World's Fair.*



*The Woman's Building was designed by a woman who graduated in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She received \$1,000 for the commission when men usually received \$10,000.*

she rented a combined apartment and gallery in the famed Sherwood Building. The remarkable complex was completed in 1880 by artist John Sherwood and was considered a pioneer among studio buildings. At seven stories high, it was a skyscraper in its day, and it served to anchor one end of New York's art district. The Sherwood contained 45 three-room and four-room suites that included a large studio space and a reception room or living room. The ground floor even included a restaurant that served artists' families and visitors. The building was known for its art tenants hosting themed parties that made national news. An art journal described the building thusly:

Immediately after opening and for several subsequent decades, it came to be seen as a true 'headquarters of Art' for hundreds of cosmopolitan artists who ... desiring a new type of modern urban lifestyle, adopted the Sherwood as a cherished symbol of respectability. . . For many Sherwoodites, as they referred to themselves, these studio accommodations literally defined who they were as artists, perpetuating friendships formed in European ateliers, determining new associations with both patrons and peers, and establishing a societal niche that allowed them entrée into high circles of metropolitan wealth while still retaining an intriguing whiff of bohemianism.<sup>38</sup>

Maria a'Becket was reshaping her life, and Von Hillern's life would



*After Maria a'Becket moved to New York in 1888, she established a winter studio at the extraordinary Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine, Florida. The hotel had been built by Henry Flagler, a railroad builder and one of the founders of Standard Oil.*

also change in the aftermath. While New York became her home base, a'Becket maintained a winter studio in the opulent Ponce de Leon Hotel at St. Augustine, Florida, and enjoyed a Summer Studio in Bar Harbor, Maine. The Ponce, as it was popularly known, was built by industrialist Henry Flagler and one of a'Becket's patrons. A newspaper at the time noted of a'Becket: "She has been everywhere and knows everyone, so to speak, and her sparkling, spontaneous, and vivid power of conversation is as effervescent as champagne, and entertains and delights people. The world likes to be amused and there is a frankness and naiveté about Miss a'Becket that captivates all who meet her."<sup>39</sup>

In addition to traveling to her studios in St. Augustine and Bar Harbor, a'Becket spent months visiting the vacation spots popular during the Gilded Age, including Newport, Rhode Island, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, Saratoga Springs, New York, and Lake George, New York. In September 1891, she spent time at Lake George with Mrs. Ellen Dunlap Hopkins.<sup>40</sup> Just a year later, Mrs. Dunlap-Hopkins founded the New York School of Applied Design for Women. By 1895, it boasted 600 students. The local newspaper near Lake George commented, "Miss a'Becket is well known as an artist. She was a pupil of Daubigny and Louis Dumoulin, and many beautiful paintings are on exhibition here. She is a vivacious brunette and a graceful dancer."<sup>41</sup>

Ms. a'Becket's increasing success continued unabated. One newspaper reported she sold five thousand dollars in paintings in six weeks, equivalent to nearly \$150,000 today.<sup>42</sup> Cornelius Vanderbilt lived just a block from the Sherwood Building,<sup>43</sup> and his brother George purchased at least one of a'Becket's paintings. Maria a'Becket stayed at the Kenilworth Inn at Asheville, North Carolina, for part of 1893 while she painted scenes at George Vanderbilt's nearby Biltmore Estate as it was being constructed. The press at the time noted:

Miss a'Becket is an artist whose brilliant and remarkable work is greatly in vogue among New York collectors and connoisseurs. Mr. George Vanderbilt is one of the appreciative buyers of her work, which is sold from the easel, almost, so that it is almost impossible for much of it to be exhibited. It is brought 'out of bond,' so to speak, by the millionaire clientele that have 'discovered' her... it is certainly true that there is a vivid, throbbing life in her landscapes and marines that entirely defies description, and which peculiarly appeals to critical lovers of art.<sup>44</sup>

Maria a'Becket's summer location at Bar Harbor likely encouraged marine paintings, and she became somewhat known for her treatment of skies and seas as well as her earlier focus on trees during her Fisher's

Hill years. Her studio at Bar Harbor was named the “Bungalow” and was situated adjacent to one of the “best known and finest” hotels. An August 29, 1897, article in *The Boston Globe* details the studio, but points out that a large portion of her paintings were not for sale. The reporter explained they were to be sold after her death to endow a fund for struggling artists.

One of her seascapes, entitled “The Storm” was selected for the 1893 Columbian Exposition, probably the most extravagant World’s Fair ever held in the United States. Her painting hung prominently in the Rotunda of the Woman’s Building. One international critic referred to it as “the most interesting work in the whole collection.”<sup>45</sup> In the Publisher’s Preface to the official guide for the Woman’s Building, a writer commented, “The World’s Columbian Exposition has afforded women an unprecedented opportunity to present to the world a justification of her claim to be placed on complete equality with man.”<sup>46</sup> The Palace of Fine Arts and the Woman’s Building were part of the Fair for the first time, representing an attempt to balance the more typical emphases on industry and inventions.<sup>47</sup>

Few paintings by women were hung in the Palace of Fine Arts; instead, they were placed in the Woman’s Building. The Lady Managers for the building “...sought to recalibrate the feminine, to enlarge woman’s sphere so that future generations could aspire to a broader band of activities and happier lives.”<sup>48</sup> The building was designed by Architect Sophia Hayden, a four-year graduate with honors in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She received from three to ten times less for the commission than men typically received.<sup>49</sup>

At home in New York City, a’Becket led an active life. She became a director of the newly incorporated Guild of the Infant Savior, a Catholic maternity home and orphanage,<sup>50</sup> she joined the new and highly prestigious Woman’s Art Club based in Manhattan,<sup>51</sup> and in 1896, she was a heavy supporter of St. Benedict’s Home for Destitute Colored Children, including a donation of more than twenty paintings to be sold at a tea fundraiser.<sup>52</sup>

Maria a’Becket, about sixty years old, died of heart disease September 6, 1904, at St. Vincent Hospital in New York City; funeral services were held two days later at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church.<sup>53</sup> It is not known where she was buried. Her only living relative was her unmarried brother John, who was a writer for Catholic publications and also lived in New York City. A year after her death, John requested financial assistance from George Vanderbilt to help prepare Maria’s inventory of paintings for auction.<sup>54</sup> An eighty-page auction catalog featured her paintings, and also

listed works by Charles Ayers Whipple and “Men of the Hudson River School.” The auction was held April 26-27, 1911, in Watertown, New York. While her name was featured, there were only thirteen paintings by her listed among the 225 works in the catalog.<sup>55</sup> Sadly, her brother John died as a result of a defective gas stove just a few months after the auction. According to art historian Christopher Volpe, landscape painting was of less interest to American patrons and by 1913, Maria a’Becket had “all but vanished from public consciousness.”<sup>56</sup> Her passing was not mentioned in Virginia news, despite her prominent life here in the 1880s.

Volpe also commented that it was not so much Maria’s work, but “how early she created it, how successful she became, and against what odds. Few women ventured outside of the accepted genres and mainstream styles of the day ... [she] made her name on American soil and on her own terms.”

<sup>57</sup> A compiled list of known works by Maria a’Becket shows ownership by a variety of regional museums in the East and in private collections.

It is not yet known how or why Bertha Van Hillern and Maria a’Becket selected Fisher’s Hill as the location for their Summer Studio in 1880. It certainly gave them access to their prized oak forests and the “wilds” near the mountains, yet it was still reasonably accessible to rail transportation and big cities. They could work hard and live frugally at Fisher’s Hill, then enjoy the pleasures and convenience of urban life.

In reading the various newspapers and other reports, it seems possible that Maria was not only an artistic mentor for Van Hillern, but she may have provided the promotional energy that kept their works and names in the public eye. Bertha’s national name recognition helped to make that an easier task. Why a’Becket left in 1888 is not known. Perhaps it was as simple as growing weary of her own Barbizon preferences for wild, natural surroundings. Writing about herself in 1884, she pointed out “There is a peculiar sadness about many of her pictures, where noble old trees bear the marks of long, hard struggles with the elements...”<sup>58</sup> Perhaps that peculiar sadness had become too powerful in the wilderness. Regardless, when she arrived in New York, a’Becket’s career rushed forward and saw new heights; Van Hillern’s seemed to bump along and slowly lose speed.

### **Finding her place**

In 1887, just before a’Becket’s departure, Van Hillern had declared that trees would be her specialty and left on her California journey to sketch the behemoth trees of the West.<sup>59</sup> That year was also an active exhibition year for Bertha, and *The Staunton Spectator* reported on November 2 that



she was returning from a trip to Boston and New York and was stopping at the Hotel Rennert [Baltimore]. "At present, Miss Von Hillern has paintings at the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association Exhibition in Boston, in the Chicago Industrial Exposition, and the Piedmont Exposition in Atlanta, Ga." The writer added that one painting had been purchased by Col. Albert Pope of Boston; at least one academic credits Pope with being the first to implement mass production practices in a factory. Pope had seen an English bicycle at the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition that intrigued him, so he started his own company to make them under the Columbia name. In 1897, he started an electric automobile manufacturing company.

By May 1888, Maria was gone, and Bertha was finishing up a one-person show of 17 landscapes at Williams & Everett, a Boston gallery.<sup>60</sup>

In September of 1888, author Emma Howard Wight of Baltimore arrived at Fisher's Hill and went with Van Hillern on a lengthy circle by train to Staunton, Lexington, Natural Bridge, and Luray, eventually arriving back at Fisher's Hill. Emma wrote a detailed travelogue of the trip for the September 5 issue of *The Staunton Spectator*. Their first overnight was in Staunton at the Virginia Hotel. In what would become an odd twist of fate, the "insane asylum" was their first "sightseeing visit" the next morning. A physician escorted them on a full-fledged tour of the facilities, and Emma rated it as "well-worth seeing." She was especially impressed with a "large ball-room where they have dancing and entertainments ... this room has been very beautifully decorated with fancy articles made by the insane women who are taught by some philanthropic ladies of Staunton."

There had been previous contacts between the threesome of a'Becket, Van Hillern, and Emma Howard Wight along with other women in art and literature, but after a'Becket left for New York, Van Hillern and Wight often kept company with each other, visiting and taking trips. All three women were devout Catholics; Wight was the youngest of the trio, born about 1863 in Baltimore. She had graduated from the nearby Academy of the Visitation. Some of the trips Van Hillern and Wight made were reported as necessary for business, such as one in July 1889 when they visited New York, Boston, Newport, Philadelphia "and other Eastern Cities." Traveling by both rail and boat, they reported that it was as successful in business as it was pleasant.<sup>61</sup>

The years 1890 and 1891 saw little reporting about Von Hillern's art achievements, indirectly implying she was not very active artistically; perhaps momentum had carried her since a'Becket's departure, and it was now running out of steam. Van Hillern was still young; probably she was



only in her mid to late thirties. Like so many efforts in her life, Van Hillern apparently bucked the establishment when it came to painting. About ten years ago, one thorough researcher noted that none of Bertha's paintings were believed to have survived;<sup>62</sup> several drawings had been identified, but no paintings. However, as part of this research project, one painting has been located in the Virginia Museum of History and Culture (formerly Virginia Historical Society), and two paintings have been found in private ownership. It is hoped that still more will be identified as Van Hillern's story becomes better known.

At least some of Van Hillern's work was done in large scale formats; they were works commissioned for grand hotels. Women were not supposed to paint on a large scale. Art historian and author Wanda Corn noted:

Until the early twentieth century, and rarely even then, women artists did not receive commissions for public art. From Michelangelo to Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Eugene Delacroix to Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, the creation of large-scale murals and sculptures had traditionally been men's work. Only men, it was presumed, had the necessary brawn and stamina to work on scaffolds and ladders to create monumental decorations . . . On rare occasions, an exceptional woman painter . . . managed to defy gendered expectations and paint large canvases. . . But in 1890 American women painters did not work on anything larger than an easel painting.<sup>63</sup>

Unfortunately, the large murals by Von Hillern seem to have been destroyed by circumstances. In December 1884, *The Staunton Spectator* noted that Bertha had painted and installed a large mural at The Carrollton, a new and modern hotel in Baltimore. In November 1885, Bertha came home to Fisher's Hill after spending "the entire season" at Saratoga Springs. She stopped in Boston and picked up commissions for paintings, including a large one of a "forest interior" to be installed in Boston's luxurious Hotel Vendome.<sup>64</sup> In July 1889, the *St. Johnsbury (VT) Caledonian* reported she had sold her large painting titled "Pine Barrens of Florida" to be hung in the Hotel Brunswick parlors in Boston.<sup>65</sup> All three hotels met with destructive ends: The Carrollton was burned to the ground in a 1904 fire that consumed much of downtown Baltimore;<sup>66</sup> the Hotel Vendome in Boston burned in 1971, killing nine firefighters; the Hotel Brunswick was razed in 1957 for urban development. Bertha's murals undoubtedly went down with all of them.

While news coverage of Bertha was diminishing, coverage of authoress Emma Howard Wight was ramping up. In the late 1880s – when she was in her mid-twenties – Wight was writing articles for the "Catholic Mirror," short stories for newspapers, and serious travelogues for vari-

ous publications, including *The Staunton Spectator*. Her first book, *Passion Flowers and the Cross*, was published in 1891 as a religious novel. Another early book, *Little Maid of Israel*, was re-published in 2019 as a Kindle book and was made available in a Romanian edition in 2017. It seems like Wight was a “character,” and an outspoken one at that, if newspaper accounts of the era are true.

## A new summer cottage

In May 1890, the world was spinning with economic optimism, and Van Hillern was ready to emerge from her quiet wilderness at Fisher’s

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THE MONUMENTAL CITY,



## “THE CARROLLTON.”

This new and beautiful Hotel, located upon the site of the “Old Fountain Hotel,” extended by an elegant front on Baltimore Street, is convenient alike to the business man and the tourist.

It is the only Hotel in Baltimore of the new Style, embracing Elevators, Suits of Rooms, with Baths, and all conveniences; perfect ventilation and light throughout, and was planned and built as a Hotel, new from its foundation.

Its elegant and convenient Office and Exchange Room, with Telegraph, &c., will at all times, be at the disposal of the merchants and citizens of the City—its builders.

The location of the Ladies’ Entrance on Baltimore Street, and the beautiful Drawing Rooms connected therewith, will give to families more than the usual degree of quietude and seclusion.

The undersigned refers to his career of over thirty years as a Hotel Manager in New York and Baltimore, feels confident, that with a new and modern house, he can give entire satisfaction to his guests.

**R. B. COLEMAN,**

*The Staunton Spectator announced in 1884 that Bertha had sold a large mural to The Carrollton Hotel in Baltimore. The scene had been created from woodlands near the Summer Studio at Fisher’s Hill in Shenandoah County. Unfortunately, the mural was destroyed when The Carrollton burned in 1904. The fire swept through the downtown core of the city.*

Hill. The second industrial revolution was underway; new transportation systems, electrification, and other advances were altering the character of everyday life. *The Indianapolis Journal* and many other newspapers carried a short article announcing that Van Hillern and Wight would build a summer cottage at Middletown, Virginia, featuring one side fitted up with a studio and the other side with a study.<sup>67</sup> One article still referred to Van Hillern as a pedestrian, an artist and as a Catholic who walked eleven miles to church and back.<sup>68</sup>

As the announcement of the new summer cottage was being made, a persistent and short article kept popping up in newspapers throughout the East: Bertha Von Hillern had “made a pot of money” in Virginia real estate. Neither Bertha nor Emma seemed to own any real estate until July 1890, when a “lottery” booklet for the Middletown Land & Improvement Company showed they had won the right to purchase a lot on Middletown’s “Boom land.”<sup>69</sup> In the late 1800s, almost every town had a “land and improvement company” led by an optimistic group of citizens who provided a detailed plan for their community to grow. Residential lots, industrial land, parks, transportation – almost everything possible was covered by typical plans. Everyone wanted to “invest” in the lots with the idea they could sell them at a future profit. There was so much interest that lotteries often selected who could actually buy.

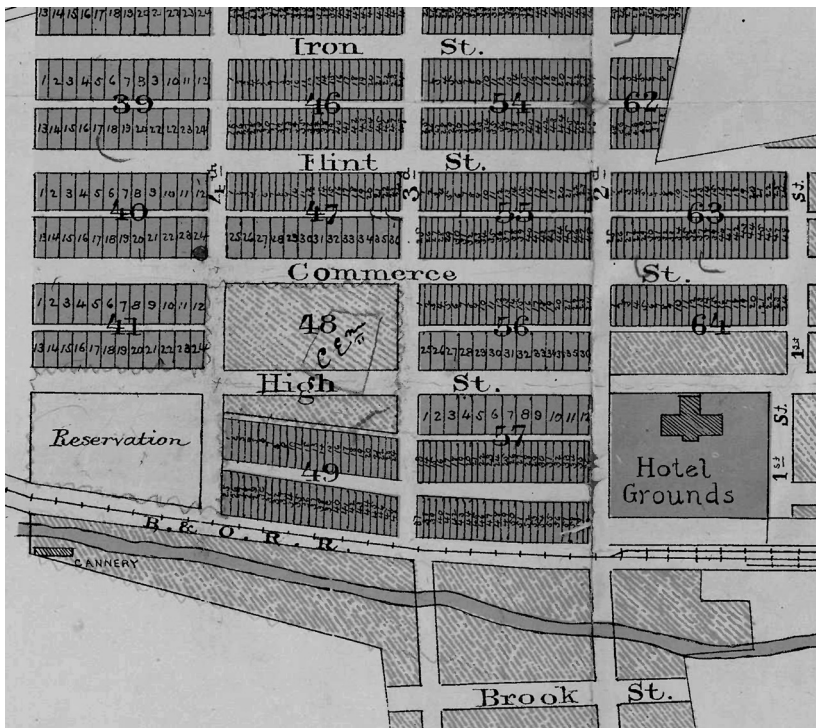
Van Hillern and Wight won a lottery in Middletown, and traded their lots for a preferred location. In 1891, the *Fredericksburg (VA) Free Lance* newspaper described Bertha as an artist of considerable fame, noting she had made an “agreeable visit” in their offices and that she was a stockholder in the Fredericksburg Development Company.<sup>70</sup> The year 1893 found Van Hillern winning a lottery with the Strasburg Land and Improvement Company for a lot in the town. An odd twist in 1893 came with Van Hillern buying a “life estate” in a foreclosure auction<sup>71</sup> of a Halifax County farm in extreme southern Virginia; the property had some unknown loose connection with Richard Mauzy, owner of *The Staunton Spectator*. She paid ninety dollars for the life estate. A tenant on the property had the right to live on the property for the rest of their life; in buying that right, Van Hillern may have collected rent while the person was alive. Even though she was putting money into these ventures, it is doubtful they added much to her coffers.

The optimism of 1890 crashed with the Panic of 1893, and most development schemes in the Shenandoah Valley failed; the agony was prolonged by the Panic of 1896. The new “summer cottage” for Van Hillern

and Wight was completed on Middletown boom land in February 1891,<sup>72</sup> but the larger town development failed. Virginia's chancery court records reveal a case written and filed by Wight – without an attorney – in February 1896. She sued Samuel Sperry, who had sold farm land to the development company, of which he was also a stockholder.<sup>73</sup> Since the project failed, Sperry purchased back some of the lots that had made up his farm and started plowing them – and the streets – for crop land.

Wight's lawsuit made it clear that Sperry, a prominent Middletown citizen, had not (and could not) purchase the streets, as the streets had been laid out and dedicated. She made the point that it took five times longer to get their livestock to water because the nearby streets were plowed, and they were forced to take a roundabout route for everything, including going to the post office. Emma was asking the court to stop Sperry from plowing the streets.

Throughout the process, Sperry maintained an arrogant attitude; he was snide about the \$1,500 value Wight had placed on their cottage, and he clearly thought he could do as he pleased. At one point, the judge



*This small section of the map for the Middletown Land and Improvement Company includes Block 40 with lots 12 and 24 that were purchased by Von Hillern and Wight. The Mt. Carmel Cemetery (shown here as Block 48) is diagonally across the street. The cemetery society produced two of Wight's playlets as a fundraiser.*

charged Sperry with contempt of court for his continuing attitude and for continuing to plow the streets. The judge appeared to be very supportive of Wight's case throughout the proceedings and eventually found in her favor. Many depositions were taken during the process, including from Van Hillern, and much could be gleaned about this period in Middletown history. Interestingly, Wight's lawsuit had the effect of preserving most of the streets that had been laid out in 1890. Frederick County's GIS map of that area matches near perfectly with the map published by the Middletown Land and Improvement Company over one hundred years ago in 1890. Streets still feature the same names, park spaces are still there, and lots are still marked off in the same way. The two lots that held the ladies' summer cottage, Lots 12 and 24 of Block 40, are still there and facing the town cemetery (Block 48) just as they were in 1890.

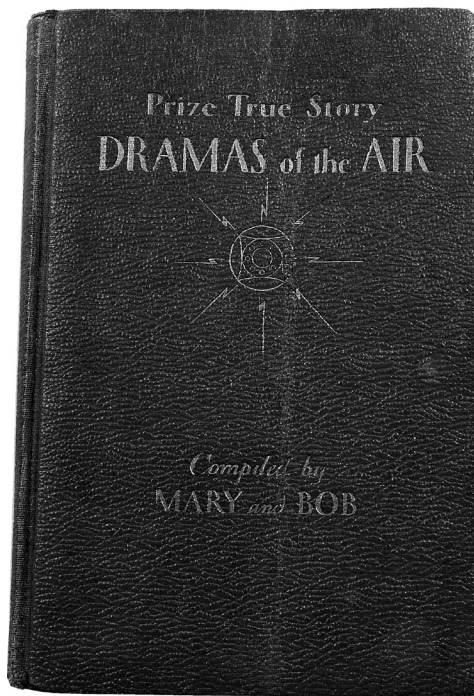
Wight's spunk may be one of the traits that earned her a spot in Frances E. Willard's book, *A Woman of the Century* in 1893. An active suffragist and founder of the World Women's Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU), Frances Willard and her co-editor selected 1,400 women in America to be included in their tome. The book highlighted Wight's writing and the only known photograph of her appeared in the book:

[Emma] submitted some of her writings with a view to their publication. They were promptly accepted, and her publications have since appeared in some of the best journals of the country. Some of her theological articles were especially commented upon by Cardinal Gibbons. Her novel, 'Passion Flowers of the Cross' appeared in 1891 and made a great stir in the literary world. She is very fond of outdoor exercise as a panacea for nearly all physical ills and a great promoter of health and beauty.<sup>74</sup>

The next few years in Middletown were quiet ones for Van Hillern. New books and serial novels for magazines and newspapers were constantly being authored by Emma; her production of written material could best be described as prolific as the new century dawned.

Wight clearly had connections. Many of her stories were syndicated by the W. D. Boyce Co. and appeared across the country in a variety of publications, often filling the front pages. The syndicator is worth a story in itself. William D. Boyce built an empire of newspapers and magazines; his syndication company provided materials to over two hundred publications, he employed over 30,000 newsboys, and, because of his concern for the well-being of his newsboys, he founded the Boy Scouts of America. Boyce also supported labor unions and women's rights, employing many women throughout his companies.





*In 1910, Miss Keim, above, purchased a playlet by Emma Howard Wight titled "Like No Other Love." She planned to produce it in Chicago later that week, according to The Washington Star newspaper.*

*One of Emma Howard Wight's radio dramas, right, was included with fourteen others in this "book of the best" published by McFadden Publications in 1931.*

*The Chicago Ledger*, a weekly fiction newspaper owned by Boyce, splashed its front page with Wight's story, "From Out the Shadows" [sic] in May 1898. Wight's writing extended beyond Boyce's syndication; a July 1900 issue of *Vickery's Fireside Visitor* magazine, based in Augusta, Maine, shared "Her Oath" on its front page. At its peak, the magazine had a circulation of 165,000 and 125 employees,<sup>75</sup> according to the Maine Bureau of Statistics. Another syndicator, Joseph B. Bowles of the Bowles Syndicate Co. in Chicago, also was successful in placing many of her stories.

Wight's Catholic connections were significant, too, in this period, with Benziger Brothers publishing books by Catholic authors or religiously themed books that appealed to their Catholic readership. Calling themselves "Printers to the Holy Apostolic See," the company printed *The Senior Lieutenant's Wager and Other Stories*, with the marquee story written by Wight.<sup>76</sup> Others by her included *The Berkleys*, a children's story published in 1902 that was promoted as "A truly inspiring tale, full of excitement. There is not a dull page."

A momentary disruption of Wight's publishing activity occurred in 1902 when the May 10 issue of *The Richmond Times* carried a special dispatch, "Miss Emma Howard Wight, of Middletown, the novelist, has been so cleverly robbed of valuable diamonds and jewelry that no clue has been obtained."<sup>77</sup> It is not known if the case was ever solved.

While news about Bertha continued to be notably muted, Emma Howard Wight was not about to let the world pass her by; she started moving into other writing genres, the first being plays. A storiette she wrote titled "*Churning Still*" ran in the October 1895 *Munsey's Magazine*, a nationally distributed favorite. She converted that to a play that would be presented by the Mt. Carmel Cemetery Society in Middletown in 1907.<sup>78</sup> A second play, titled "*My Awful Aunt*" was also being presented by the society and is also believed to be converted from a short story. Mt. Carmel Cemetery was diagonally across the street from the ladies' cottage in Middletown. Wight's first localized foray into plays led to more, though they all seemed to be short plays and sometimes referred to as "playlets."

The 1910 census showed Van Hillern as a landscape artist and Wight as a fiction writer; that year's census added the note they worked on their own and were not employed by someone else. On October 2, 1910, the *Washington (DC) Star* said Emma sold rights to a playlet, "*Like No Other Love*" to Miss Adelaide Keim, an actress and producer in Chicago.

The year 1910 proved to be catastrophic for the ladies when the Middletown cottage burned to the ground on Saturday, December 10. The story was carried in many newspapers throughout the U.S.

Miss Emma Howard Wight, dramatist and novelist, and Miss Bertha Von Hillern, retired artist, who have lived for years at Middletown, Frederick County, claim their home was set on fire Saturday night and that they lost over \$12,000 worth of rare paintings, jewelry, china and silverware, portraits and other valuables. Their Scotch collie, which is said to have given alarm at night when similar attempts were made to burn the house, was poisoned on Friday. Miss Wight said yesterday she believed certain interests had conspired to oust both women in order to get their land.<sup>79</sup>

Follow-up articles within a few days say an arrest was expected soon, but no arrest information has been found. At least one report states the ladies temporarily moved to the Wayside Inn on Middletown's Main Street. The loss of \$12,000 is equivalent to about \$325,000 in 2020.

The devastating fire was such a financial and emotional loss that it likely started a slow downward slide. Van Hillern was still young, roughly in her mid-fifties at this time, but remained quiet. Wight was in her mid-forties. There was no more traveling, no more luxurious hotels, but Wight continued with

her energetic writing and innovation, as well as being engaged with the public. She seemed to provide the primary financial support of the household. Newspaper accounts of the ladies about seven months after the fire refer to Van Hillern as retired and to Wight as a dramatist and playwright.

A fascinating trait about Wight was her attempts to remain current with new opportunities for writing, which she continued until at least three years before her death. In 1913, she entered a photoplay contest and won three hundred dollars from Monarch Film Company of New York for the best submission. Photoplays used still photos rather than moving film to illustrate the story and were considered part of the silent film era. Wight's submission to Monarch included scenes from Middletown such as Wayside Inn, Larrick's Hotel, Waverly, and Belle Grove.<sup>80</sup> In 1916, one newspaper reported that Wight had submitted a five-reel synopsis to the Famous Players Film Company of New York.<sup>81</sup> Through mergers that began in the same year, Famous Players became Paramount Pictures in just a few years. Mary Pickford, Lionel Barrymore, Cecil B. DeMille are just a few of the names associated with Famous Players and their later entities. Wight apparently was writing successful radio scripts; in 1931, Mona Motor Oil award her a one thousand dollar prize for her radio drama "Son of the Governor."<sup>82</sup> In 1932, McFadden Publications selected one of her radio dramas for inclusion in a book, *Prize True Story Dramas of the Air*.<sup>83</sup> The True Story" Hour had debuted in 1928, with Bob and Mary as its popular personalities.

In the years following the house fire, Wight began demonstrating some social and political interests. On July 8, 1918, *The Winchester Star* ran an article about this avante garde woman speaking to an African- American church:

Miss Emma Howard Wight made an address on 'Our Flag' at Mount Zion M.E. Church in Strasburg last Sunday on the occasion of children's day services. Miss Wight gave some interesting information relative to the work that the colored women are doing for the government. They raised \$5,000,000 during the last Liberty loan; poor colored women in a tobacco factory in Norfolk alone raised \$91,000. The National Association of Colored Women has a membership of 100,000, and is active in all lines of war work.

On February 11, 1920, *The Washington Herald* ran a brief story stating that Wight was "conferencing" with Virginia Republican leaders, urging them to support Gen. Leonard Wood as the presidential candidate when the Republican convention convened in Chicago. Wood was the leading candidate on the first four ballots, but ultimately lost to Warren G. Harding.

On September 1, 1920, *The Staunton News Leader* quoted "leading

suffrage worker” Emma Howard Wight as saying she had received a telegram from the national headquarters of the Woman’s party encouraging Virginia women to register to vote without delay. “Miss Wight expects to inaugurate a campaign here [Winchester area] and elsewhere to line up the women eligible to vote.” The short article also pointed out that “...the women of this section of Virginia have not been enthused as much as had been predicted over the right to register and vote in the coming election. Up to Saturday night, less than 30 women had registered in Winchester, although much publicity had been given regarding the simple rules of procedure provided by the last legislature.” It is not known whether Wight inaugurated a new voting campaign.

### **At home in Winchester**

Unfortunately, the 1920 census does not list occupations, but it does show the ladies living at an unknown address on Middletown’s Main Street. It appears they are within the last few houses on one end of the street. Both Van Hillern and Wight are generally quiet, though occasionally the quietness is interrupted by a burst of activity from Wight. As time goes by, it seems their financial circumstances are not very good. A 1929 letter written by Wight showed they moved to South Cameron Street in downtown Winchester; the 1930 census confirmed that location and showed Van Hillern as “baking” and Wight still listed as a writer.

The Winchester-based *Evening Star* referred to Bertha Von Hillern as a well-known doughnut and rusk baker in a short article on October 27, 1933, adding that Van Hillern was hopeful that Betty Crocker would tell Van Hillern’s life story on the radio. There was no longer any mention of Van Hillern’s fame as a nationally-known pedestrian and landscape painter.

Less than six months after the article and during the depths of the Great Depression, Bertha Von Hillern was sent to live at the Frederick County Poor Farm,<sup>84</sup> a home for destitute residents of Winchester and Frederick County. Over the years, the number of residents had dwindled to just eight.<sup>85</sup> On May 29, 1934, just six weeks after her arrival there, she was transferred to Western State Hospital in Staunton. Bertha Van Hillern probably never saw her friend Emma Wight again.

The admissions registers at Western State precisely detailed every piece of clothing she brought with her, as well as what she wore. Any other articles she brought were also carefully recorded. The diagnosis for admission was dementia.

Wight was sent to the Poor Farm on October 24, 1934,<sup>86</sup> possibly because





*Bertha Von Hillern was buried in the Western State Hospital cemetery on the same day she died, likely in a cardboard coffin. Her unmarked gravestone is in this Terrace #36. The cemetery land became private property some years ago. This is the fifth grave from the left on Terrace #36 after undergrowth was pushed away. Gravestones are not marked or identified in any way.*



Van Hillern was no longer at home to help care for her; Wight had been diagnosed with uterine cancer. She died eight months later at the Poor Farm on June 23, 1935.<sup>87</sup> She was buried in what is called the “Stranger’s Lot” at Mt. Hebron Cemetery in Winchester; the graves in the Stranger’s Lot are unmarked.<sup>88</sup>

Records at Western State showed Van Hillern had improved, so she was “furloughed” to St. Sophia’s in Richmond on September 26, 1934; St. Sophia’s was a home for the elderly poor operated by the Catholic Little Sisters of the Poor. However, she was returned to Western State several months later for her final stay there on December 21, 1934.

Bertha Von Hillern died September 20, 1939, and is buried among the three thousand graves in the old Western State Cemetery now on private property in Staunton. Using a rough diagram, two telephone conversations with hospital staff, and three hours of time for two people, Bertha Van Hillern’s gravesite was found in the overgrown Terrace #36, fifth grave from the left.

Rest in peace, dear Bertha.

## **POSTLUDE**

Webster’s definition of “postlude” gives me the freedom to use it here. Postscript seems too unimportant.

This story was an accident. In researching a subject related to Fisher’s Hill, Virginia, I bumped into a tiny newspaper item that mentioned Bertha Von Hillern’s studio at Fisher’s Hill. That was the beginning, and as I write this, it is now two years later. Thousands of bits of information have been gleaned, and wonderful new friends have been made along the way.

All three women had been forgotten in the Fisher’s Hill community. The only hint was a retired Bridgewater College professor who grew up at Fisher’s Hill and who recalled being told as a boy that there were valuable paintings in a particular house. Ultimately, two paintings by Van Hillern were found in the home, and it turned out to be the home where the ladies had rented a second story room for the 1880s. Other than that, there is no community memory of the three women.

The lives of Bertha, Maria, and Emma are important pieces of the puzzle about women in America; they proved that women are physically capable; they were pioneers in creating wonderful art that was recognized as such by others, and they proved their ability to touch the world through writing. They mentored each other and boosted each other up in a culture that did not believe women could succeed in these things.

The fact that I am writing this today is in part due to these women and others like them.

There are many mysteries yet to be solved about these three women, and I will undoubtedly be working on this story until I no longer can.

I feel like I know Bertha, and Maria, and Emma, and I am very thankful they are part of my life.

**Researchers for the Fisher's Hill Ladies Project** are Cheryl Lyon, Dayton, Virginia; Hope Brim, Strasburg, Virginia; Gloria Stickley, Strasburg, Virginia; and Neil Thorne, Fisher's Hill, Virginia.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Death certificate, September 20, 1939

<sup>2</sup>Telephone interview 5-22-2019 from the cemetery with Western State Hospital staff

<sup>3</sup>Algeo, Matthew. *Pedestrianism: When Watching People Walk Was America's Favorite Spectator Sport*. Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL, VII.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>5</sup>*Chicago Daily Tribune*, Chicago, IL. December 19, 1875, 13.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Geraldine Curtis, great granddaughter of Tryphena Curtis, 11-16-2019.

<sup>7</sup>*The Chicago Tribune*, Chicago, IL., January 30, 1876, p.16, col. 5.

<sup>8</sup>*Chicago Daily Tribune*, Chicago, IL., February 13, 1876, 12.

<sup>9</sup>*Harrisonburg Daily News*, Harrisonburg, Va., November 9, 1876.

<sup>10</sup>Algeo, 111.

<sup>11</sup>*Cincinnati Daily Star*, Cincinnati, Ohio. March 8, 1878, 4.

<sup>12</sup>Shaulis, Dahn. "Pedestriennes: Newsworthy But Controversial Women in Sporting Entertainment." *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 26, Vol. 1 (Spring 1999) 33.

<sup>13</sup>*Cincinnati Daily Star*, Cincinnati, Ohio. February 15, 1878, 1.

<sup>14</sup>*The Woman's Journal*, Boston, Ma., January 6, 1877.

<sup>15</sup>*The Baltimore Sun*, Baltimore, Md.. April 13, 1919.

<sup>16</sup>*The Buffalo Express*, Buffalo, N.Y., February 14, 1878.

<sup>17</sup>*New York Daily Graphic*, New York, N.Y., February 9, 1878, col. 4.

<sup>18</sup>*Osage Valley Banner*, Tuscumbia, Missouri. January 22, 1880.

<sup>19</sup>Maria a'Becket letter to Charles Kurtz. July 22, 1884. Charles Kurtz Collection, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>20</sup>Elliot Bostwick Davis, "Life Drawing from Ape to Human: Charles Darwin's Theories of Evolution and William Rimmer's Art Anatomy," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 2, no. 2

(Spring 2003), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring03/219-life-drawing-from-ape-tohuman-charles-darwins-theories-of-evolution-and-william-rimmers-art-anatomy>

<sup>21</sup>Volpe, Christopher. *Maria J. C. a'Becket: Rediscovering an American Artist*. Maine History, vol. 45 December 2010, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Me., 209.

<sup>22</sup>Maria a'Becket letter to Charles Kurtz. July 10, 1884. Charles Kurtz Collection, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>23</sup>*Stephens City Star*, Stephens City, Va.. May 13, 1882. vol. 1, no. 43.

<sup>24</sup>Amory, Dita. "The Barbizon School: French Painters of Nature." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-.

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bfpn/hd\\_bfpn.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bfpn/hd_bfpn.htm) (March 2007)

<sup>25</sup>Maria a'Becket letter to Sylvester Rosa Koehler. March 13, 1883. Sylvester Rosa Koehler Collection, box 5, folder 73, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>26</sup>*The Staunton Spectator*, Staunton, Va., June 16, 1886.

<sup>27</sup>*The Evening World*, New York, NY.. October 19, 1887, 3 o'clock edition, 3.

<sup>28</sup>Maria a'Becket letter to Charles Kurtz. July 25, 1884. Charles Kurtz Collection, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>29</sup>*Proceedings at the Opening of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, Ma., Tenth Annual Report. 1876-1887.

- <sup>30</sup>Maria a'Becket letter to Charles Kurtz. July 10, 1884. Charles Kurtz Collection, Smithsonian Institution.
- <sup>31</sup>*Wheeling Register*, Wheeling, WV.. March 27, 1884.
- <sup>32</sup>*Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, N.C., January 12, 1992, p. 83.
- <sup>33</sup>Pauly, S. (2018, 12 31). The Art of Reconciliation: The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884. Retrieved from University of Georgia: [https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/pauly\\_sandra\\_201412\\_phd.pdf](https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/pauly_sandra_201412_phd.pdf)
- <sup>34</sup>Godey & Josepha Buell Hale, *Godey's Magazine*, Volumes 108-109, 2018
- <sup>35</sup>*The Staunton Spectator*, Staunton, Va., December 17, 1884.
- <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup>*Morning Press*, Santa Barbara, Ca.. May 7, 1887, vol XXII, no. 7.
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- <sup>39</sup>*The Inter-Ocean*, Chicago, Il.. August 4, 1894, p.10.
- <sup>40</sup>*Sunday Telegram-Herald*, Grand Rapids, Mi.. September 6, 1891, 1.
- <sup>41</sup>*Sunday Telegram-Herald*, Grand Rapids, Mi.. September 6, 1891, 1.
- <sup>42</sup>*The Inter-Ocean*, *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup>Corn, Wanda M.. *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Ca.. 2011, 28
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- <sup>50</sup>*The New York Times*, New York, N.Y., April 7, 1901, 14.
- <sup>51</sup>Volpe, 221.
- <sup>52</sup>*The World*, New York, New York. April 19, 1896, 35
- <sup>53</sup>*New York Herald*, New York, N.Y., September 8, 1904.
- <sup>54</sup>Volpe, 224.
- <sup>55</sup>Catalog of Modern Paintings from the Estate of Maria a'Becket. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/modernpaintingsOOclar>
- <sup>56</sup>Volpe, 225
- <sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 227-228
- <sup>58</sup>Maria a'Beckett letter to Charles Kurtz. July 10, 1884. Charles Kurtz Collection, Smithsonian Institution.
- <sup>59</sup>*Essex County Herald*, Guildhall, Vt., June 10, 1887.
- <sup>60</sup>*St. Johnsbury Caledonian*, St. Johnsbury, Vt.. May 3, 1888.
- <sup>61</sup>*The Staunton Spectator*, Staunton, Va., July 10, 1889, vol. 66, no. 47.
- <sup>62</sup>Volpe, p. 212.
- <sup>63</sup>Corn, p. 9.
- <sup>64</sup>*The Staunton Spectator*, Staunton, Va., November 4, 1885, vol.63 no. 8.
- <sup>65</sup>*St. Johnsbury Caledonian*, St. Johnsbury, Vt., July 18, 1889.
- <sup>66</sup>*St. Mary's Beacon*, St. Mary's, Md., February 11, 1904.
- <sup>67</sup>*The Indianapolis Journal*, Indianapolis, In., May 13, 1890, p. 4.
- <sup>68</sup>*Brenham Weekly Banner*, Brenham, Tx., August 7, 1890.
- <sup>69</sup>*List of Lots: Assigned Stockholders*. Middletown Land and Improvement Company, July 2-3, 1890.
- <sup>70</sup>*Fredericksburg Free Lance*, Fredericksburg, Va., July 22, 1891.
- <sup>71</sup>Halifax County Chancery Case 1893-055.
- <sup>72</sup>*New York Press*, New York, N.Y., March 19, 1891.
- <sup>73</sup>Frederick County Chancery Court Case 1896-009

- <sup>74</sup>Willard, Frances and Livermore, Mary. *A Woman of the Century*. Charles Wells Moulton, Buffalo, N.Y., 1893, 772.
- <sup>75</sup>*Eighth Annual Report of Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics for the State of Maine*, 1894, 130.
- <sup>76</sup>*The Senior Lieutenant's Wager and Other Stories*. Benziger Brothers, New York, NY., 1905.
- <sup>77</sup>*The Times*, Richmond, Va., May 10, 1902, p. 4.
- <sup>78</sup>*Winchester Star*, Winchester, Va., August 10, 1907.
- <sup>79</sup>*Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Va., December 13, 1910, p. 2. Vol. 111, no. 295.
- <sup>80</sup>*Winchester Star*, Winchester, Va., June 2, 1913.
- <sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, February 19, 1917.
- <sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, December 5, 1931.
- <sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, August 9, 1932.
- <sup>84</sup>Admissions ledger, Frederick County Poor Farm, private collection.
- <sup>85</sup>National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, Frederick County, Va., #034-0099
- <sup>86</sup>Admissions ledger, Frederick County Poor Farm, private collection.
- <sup>87</sup>Death certificate, June 23, 1935.
- <sup>88</sup>Mount Hebron Cemetery burial ledger, emailed report.

# The History of Augusta Medical Center

By Karen H. Leigh  
(August 1992)

*Editor's note: This research paper, "The History of Augusta Medical Center," was commissioned in 1992, two years before Augusta Medical Center opened in Fishersville on September 11, 1994. Much has changed in healthcare industry and in the local community in the past twenty-seven years. This historical piece represents the tenor and emotions of the events surrounding the establishment of Augusta Medical Center in the early 1990s in an objective and accurate way, while still reflecting the intensity of the time. This contrasts with the current, growing healthcare facility that is now Augusta Health, the largest private employer in the area, with medical services that have expanded to include a Heart and Vascular Center, a Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders, a Joint Center and a Robotic Surgery Program. After joining together, the two hospitals have grown into a comprehensive community health system that was impossible to envision in 1992.*

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From bumper stickers stating "Read My Lips -- No New Hospital" to newspaper cartoons depicting the new medical center as the Taj Mahal, the history of a combined hospital for the Augusta County area has been a controversial and deeply emotional community process. As Bert Hopeman, former chairman of Augusta Hospital Corporation's planning committee and now board member emeritus, said, "If the solution hadn't been so overwhelmingly correct, it never would have happened. Because of the agonizing emotions involved, everybody wanted an alternate solution."

When Augusta Medical Center opens in Fishersville in early 1994, it will replace King's Daughters' Hospital in Staunton and Waynesboro Community Hospital in Waynesboro. The \$58 million acute care hospital



is designed to improve patient services, increase efficiency of hospital operations and more effectively accommodate increased demand for outpatient services. The new facility will allow for adaptations in a changing health care environment more easily than the older facilities in Staunton and Waynesboro. These hospitals were built in 1951 and 1955, respectively, and have been expanded and renovated many times.

Public reaction to closing the two community hospitals triggered a two-year period of letters to the local newspapers, numerous public and private meetings, and the formation of a Staunton citizens' group -- the Coalition for Health Care Awareness -- to save KDH. Although public outcry could be traced primarily to the loss of the old community hospitals which had been the focus of much pride, volunteer work and local fund raising, the idea of a combined medical center midway between Waynesboro and Staunton was also foreign to many. As Ann McPherson, chairman of AHC's Friends of Health Care, said, "Feelings have been strong for 200 years between Staunton and Waynesboro." Staunton cultivates an image of heritage and Southern gentility, of retail shops and professionals. Waynesboro is an industrial center, where executives and managers are transferred back and forth. As a result of the hospital merger, several of the area's leaders now see the long-standing community rivalry diminishing as the new medical center gets underway and have hopes that cooperation in other public services can follow.

### **Changes in Health Care**

Planning for a new hospital originated at WCH in the early 1980s, according to Kathleen Heatwole, director of planning and development at WCH from 1980-84, and now AHC's vice president for planning and development. At that time WCH began evaluating health care trends as part of its strategic planning process. The hospital was experiencing space shortages for increasing volumes of outpatient and ancillary services and operating inefficiencies resulting from declining inpatient utilization. In looking at the facility, a WCH architect determined they would spend nearly as much on renovations as on a new hospital. In addition, a renovated WCH would compromise operations by putting things where they could go instead of where they *should* be.

(Waynesboro's original hospital had opened in 1934 in a converted residence. A replacement was built in 1937; in 1955 the current SCH was built as a 61-bed facility through a large gift by Hopeman Brothers and matching community donations. Expansions and renovations in 1959, 1964, 1967, 1979, and 1975 increased the licensed bed capacity to 171 in a 132,000 square foot facility.)

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**Weather**  
Mild today; high around 70. Showers tonight; low around 50. Cooler Sunday; high in the 60s. Complete weather on page A5.

# THE DAILY NEWS LEADER

VOL. 141, NO. 61 STAUNTON, VA., 24401, MARCH 12, 1988 25 CENTS



Coming Sunday

## 2 area hospitals plan to merge

**By CINDY CORRELL**  
**Staff Writer**  
For the first time since the issue was published more than a year ago, board members of King's Daughters and Waynesboro Community hospitals met publicly Friday morning to announce plans to merge.

### King's Daughters Hospital

The merger of the boards, which would be effected in the spring if the concept is approved by corporate directors of both hospitals, is a step toward a single entity to manage the two hospitals, hospital spokesmen said.

The merger would lead to a single board of 12 directors with equal appointments from both hospitals.

At least one of the KDH directors and one of the WCH directors would be a practicing physician at the time of the election to the boards of the hospitals, the current boards will be dissolved, according to Herman C. Hagan, chairman of the Memorial Board, the holding company of WCH.

The announcement came after more than six months of behind-closed-doors meetings of task forces from each hospital, and represents a dramatic change of heart on the part of KDH officials.

Richard W. Smith, president of the KDH board of trustees, said the extensive negotiations and study of health care trends was an eye-opening experience for him and other KDH officials.

"I had a hard time coming to grips with this thing, as did other members of our task force," Smith said after Friday's news conference. "But the more we studied and after Friday's news conference, 'But the more we studied on a national scale, we had come around to the belief that we had to do it.'"

Robert Cooper, chief executive officer of WCH, has maintained that the decision to merge is a business decision, not a religious one.

Cooper reportedly top management choice

**By CINDY CORRELL**  
**Staff Writer**  
WAYNESBORO — Roger Cooper, chief executive officer of Waynesboro Community Hospital, would probably retain that position with the new corporation, a proposed merger of WCH and King's Daughters Hospital in Staunton is approved, according to WCH officials.

The new organization, which would be known as Augusta Hospital Corporation, would consist initially of a 12-member board of directors with six directors from KDH and six from WCH, including at least one practicing physician from each hospital.

The chairman of the board is elected from the members of KDH, according to Robert Cooper, chief executive officer of WCH's holding company, Memorial Hospital Inc.

The merger would be chosen from the Waynesboro organization would also serve as chief executive officer, Hagan said. It would be "Roger Cooper," he said. "But that would have to be ratified."

The vice president of the new board would probably be Paul Flanagan, current KDH administrator, Hagan continued.

at least hospital nationwide and the condition of both facilities, which were built in the 1950s.

When WCH officials announced last January that they planned to negotiate with the Staunton hospital, Smith said KDH was planning extensive renovations of its facility. The renovations would cost about \$1 million, and would be designed to convert existing inpatient units of the facility, and increasing out-patient services.

"One of the things we learned is that we were not financially able to do those renovations," Smith said Friday, speaking of the study on both sides.

Another firm that performed a study on the feasibility of each hospital's continuing to operate as it has showed that KDH was to much more shape than expected, Smith said.

Smith said, describing when the firm, which is a subsidiary of the firm, showed that a combination of the two hospitals would be the best way for the hospitals to continue to function.

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As WCH had been working to streamline its accounts and began operating "as a business," Smith said, KDH corporation began looking for ways to gain profits from their services instead of losing money. In November, of position in KDH staffing were cut.

"With the layoffs, we are showing a better bottom line," Smith said. "We had to toughen up."

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After determining WCH was not flexible enough for another renovation, the hospital board and administration undertook a financial review, which showed little or nothing in reserve. "Until that point WCH had pretty much operated bread-even," said Heatwole. Memorial Hospital Inc., WCH's ownership board, then set up a small building fund to prepare for a new building at a new location.

After Barrington Kinnaird, WCH administrator for 28 years, died in 1982, Roger Cooper was hired as the new administrator in 1983. That year proved to be a financial turning point as Medicare switched its method of paying hospitals from a costs-plus-operation method, which had paid almost all costs for Medicare patients, to DRGs, or diagnostic related groups, a fixed price mechanism for groups of illnesses. At that time Don Messimer, president of WCH Inc. (the hospital's community, or operating board), and Cooper recognized that Medicare, which comprised 40 percent of WCH's business, was going to revolutionize hospital economics. Until the advent of DRGs, it made no difference if a community hospital was profitable or not because costs were reimbursed. But now, they foresaw, hospitals were going to have to show a profit or else fall into serious trouble. "No money, no mission," is how Cooper described the new philosophy.

Cooper said he recognized early on that WCH's physical plant lacked a strong base to build upon. His focus was to implement renovations and repairs as needed to keep WCH services while building a strong financial base for long-term acute care for the future. He describes 1983 as a watershed year in which two means were implemented to trim costs and begin saving 4-6 percent of operating revenue for capital needs:

--A computer program was developed to allow doctors to monitor services used vs. costs approved for Medicare patients. It was "purely an educational tool," according to Cooper, to allow doctors to get their Medicare patients well and home while staying within approved costs. As a result, the medical staff implemented new ways to keep costs down, such as admitting patients in the mornings to reduce the number of in-patient days.

--Recognizing that staffing constitutes over 50 percent of annual operating costs, WCH reduced its work force to correspond with declining patient occupancy. In May 1983 the hospital board decided not to hire summer help or replace retirees and to eliminate overtime and curtail travel. A 32-patient surgical nursing unit was closed, and in July 109 positions were cut.

The measures worked. New earnings in 1982 and 1983 were only \$526,968 and \$685,470, respectively, but by 1985-86 WCH was one of the

most profitable hospitals in Virginia. In 1985 WCH put aside \$1,646,900 into a reserve for future needs, and in 1986, \$2,370,988.

### **Committees and Consultants**

With rapid changes occurring in the health care industry, WCH continued its focus on long-range planning. In June 1986 it hired the international consulting firm of Ernst & Whinney to conduct a six-month study on how WCH could best cope with and manage change. Among questions to be studied were renovating, replacing or rebuilding the aging facility; the possibility of affiliating with other health care organizations or sharing special services with other providers; needed programs and services; funding and alternative use for available space.

At a retreat for more than 50 WCH board members, administrators and medical staff on June 19, 1986, details of Ernst & Whinney's planned study were outlined. At this time Cooper acknowledged that KDH had been approached on their interest in a merger study but had declined.

When Ernst & Whinney's report was released in January 1978, it predicted the Upper Valley region could not long support two full-service hospitals. It recommended a dual-site plan, with a new hospital to be built on a centrally located site in Augusta County and the old WCH and KDH kept for outpatient care and support functions. The ideal solution, according to the report, would be a merger of WCH and KDH in one central facility offering a full range of primary and secondary care for both inpatients and outpatients. If KDH chose not to join a new facility, WCH should proceed to move to Augusta County's population center, according to the recommendations.

"It wasn't a revolution. It wasn't a bolt from the blue," said Cooper. "Those trends were coming together."

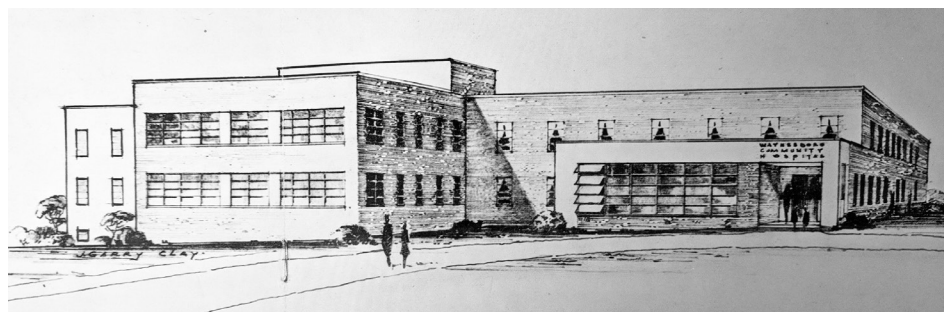
Even so, community concern was evident and the report sparked an editorial clash between Waynesboro's *News-Virginian* and Staunton's *Daily News Leader*. The Staunton paper accused Cooper of "unprofessional conduct" in criticizing KDH for declining to undertake a joint venture. The Waynesboro paper, in turn, defended Cooper and chastised KDH for not responding to Cooper's offer to review the consultant's findings.

At the same time WCH was preparing for a new facility, KDH had been looking at a construction and renovation project at its existing site. The philosophy there, according to Paul Flanagan, KDH administrator from 1956-88, was to operate as a non-profit hospital, on a break-even basis. The hospital was an attractive facility in good physical condition; profits were put back into improvements. (The original Staunton hospital had been built





*A brand-new King's Daughters' Hospital opened on North Augusta in 1951. (Courtesy Augusta County Historical Society)*



*An architectural drawing of the million-dollar Waynesboro Community Hospital that opened on Oak Avenue in 1955. (Photo courtesy Waynesboro Public Library)*

in 1895 with 15 beds; expanded facilities were added adjacent to the original facility in 1905 with other renovations and additions continuing through the 1950s. In 1951 a new 117-bed facility was built and named King's Daughters' Hospital. Major renovations and expansions took place in 1959, 1965, 1970 and 1977. By then KDH was licensed for 243 beds in a 202,000 square foot facility.) When KDH had capital needs, the board went to the community for support and they had always come through, Flanagan said. At the time of the WCH study, KDH had a two-phase master plan, which included a new emergency room, additional space for outpatient services and more parking.

During a year-long intensive study WCH considered four options:

1) The dual-site plan, endorsed by Ernst & Whinney and the WCH medical staff. This plan, then estimated at \$20 million, would involve construction of a new 120-bed hospital in Augusta and renovation of the old Oak Avenue



facility as a community health center, to include an emergency room and outpatient care.

2) Doing nothing. (Another consultant, an architect with Henningson, Durham and Richardson of Alexandria, had stated WCH failed to meet existing codes in a number of respects and did not lend itself to the needs of the future. This option was ruled out early in the study.)

3) Renovating and constructing on the present site at an estimated \$8 million.

4) Developing a 250-bed regional medical center in conjunction with KDH at an estimated \$35 million, financed through tax-free bonds and approximately \$9 million in reserve.

On July 2, 1987, WCH's 20-member memorial board voted unanimously to go ahead with the regional medical center concept. It also recommended immediate purchase of an appropriate site in Augusta County and six months of negotiation with KDH before finalizing plans for the regional center. The six-month waiting period had also been recommended by the WCH operating board the previous week.

Hopeman, then president of the memorial board, said the decision was a grueling one. It took three to four months of reviewing the options and a final six-hour board meeting before reaching consensus. Everyone agreed a new hospital was needed and it made sense to build it between the two communities. However, the board was divided as to whether it should be in Fishersville or on the edge of Waynesboro. The consensus was that Fishersville was probably the right solution even though it could put KDH out of business. Cooper previously had discussed the merger idea with the KDH administrator, but the answer was "no."

Hopeman said some board members were concerned about antagonizing the Staunton business community and at one point he counted nine Memorial Board Inc. members in favor of the Fishersville site, nine against, and two undecided. Don McClure, WCH Inc. board member from 1981-88, emphasized, "None of us wanted to do anything that would put Kings' Daughters' out of business." The final vote of both the memorial and community boards was to build the hospital in Fishersville but with Staunton's support. A special negotiating committee, comprised of equal numbers of board members from WCH and KDH, was established and given six months to handle the merger negotiations between Waynesboro and Staunton.

Meanwhile, KDH had been proceeding with plans for its renovation. Together with WCH, Rockingham Memorial Hospital in Harrisonburg and

Stonewall Jackson Hospital in Lexington, it had hired a separate consulting firm—Jennings, Ryan, Federa and Co. of Chicago—to study the possibility of further affiliation and shared cost effectiveness. (Shenandoah Shared Hospital Services Inc. had been formed in 1982 by KDH, WCH and RMH to provide high-cost technology such as CT scanning and magnetic resonance imaging for their respective communities on a shares-cost basis.) On Oct. 22, 1987, Jennings' report stated that KDH had the weakest financial base of the four hospitals and was most in need of affiliation, WCH being second in need of affiliation. Furthermore, it found KDH to be "self-liquidating," able to borrow only \$1.1 million of the \$9 million needed for its building plan. The firm recommended that KDH merge with WCH with no prior conditions, allowing the new hospital board to determine the course of the two facilities.

"The whole report shook us up and brought us increasingly around to thinking of a merger," said Smith. He said he then acknowledged the truth WCH had realized in the early 1980s: "Just because you're a non-profit doesn't mean you don't need to make a profit."

### **The Process of Negotiation**

As with any merger, individual personalities come into play. Similar to the differences in the communities themselves, the Staunton and Waynesboro hospitals had been run in different ways by administrators with different styles. At KDH Flanagan had excelled in community relations. Staunton's 500-plus corporators and four auxiliaries felt a strong sense of "ownership" in their hospital. Flanagan was attentive to individuals with suggestions and the medical staff enjoyed a collaborative relationship with the administration where patient care was considered the bottom line. At Waynesboro Cooper was respected as a highly capable financial manager, a take-charge leader with an aggressive, businesslike personality.

Early on Cooper had alienated members of the KDH medical staff by referring to Staunton's renovation plan as a "Band-Aid approach to medicine" during a presentation to the Augusta County Medical Association, according to Hopeman. Staunton's initial disinterest in the Ernst & Whinney report and the previously mentioned newspaper editorials also contributed to a tense atmosphere for negotiations.

Hopeman, president of WCH's ownership board, had been designated to lead negotiations with Staunton. He was a prominent figure in Waynesboro, having run Hopeman Brothers, his family business, for years, and also having run on the Republican ticket for the state Senate. Smith, a well-known and respected Staunton attorney, took on a similar

role as president of KDH's trustees. Hopeman recalled Smith's opening words as they began the series of meetings leading to the merger of the two hospitals: "Bert, I feel like I have a gun at my head." Hopeman said he replied, "Dick, I'm sorry you feel that way, but it's probably true." The atmosphere could only improve.

"After that first meeting, if I had been a betting man, I would have said there was no way Staunton was going to take part in a merger," said McClure, also a member of the negotiating team. However, in time, a level of trust built up between Staunton and Waynesboro leaders.

For approximately 2 1/2 years Richard Smith was heavily involved in the negotiations, culminating in his appointment as chairman of the new Augusta Hospital Corporation Board of Directors from April to October 1988. Hopeman would become AHC's first vice chairman. Their volunteer time, as well as that of other board members, can only be described as overwhelming. Smith maintained a list of 55 meetings involving the WCH/KDH planning and merger from November 1986 through March 1988 alone. Hopeman estimated he spent 20-30 hours each week on hospital business during this time. McClure, president of WCH Inc. at the time of the merger, said he attended 364 hospital-related meetings that year.

Throughout the process Waynesboro, of course, was pushing the merger and a new combined medical center. Staunton had to be convinced, one step at a time. In assessing KDH's bargaining position, Smith outlined the hospital's weaknesses at a Nov. 17, 1987 medical staff meeting:

1) "Decreased utilization of acute care beds—down from a census for 165 or 170 a few short years ago to an average of 108, and still dropping during a recent three-week period the census was in the low 90s and high 80s."

2) A growing obsolescence of facilities and equipment that we find it increasingly hard to replace."

3) Inability to service additional debt, due to a weak financial performance."

On the positive side, he rated strong community support, 1986 admissions (20 percent higher than WCH's and emergency room visits 39 percent above WCH), more medical services than most hospitals of that size, a strong and stable medical staff, strong volunteer program, and a modern-looking plant well located geographically. At the same meeting the financial reality was made clear when Flanagan announced a necessary reduction in the KDH work force to compensate for declining inpatients.

On Staunton's side support for a new hospital grew as hospital leaders became convinced a merger would keep KDH financially solvent

and safeguard the future of health care for the area. On March 10, 1988, the hospital's respective boards approved a definitive merger agreement. The newly formed Augusta Hospital Corporation would own both hospitals. A 12-member board, consisting of six members from Staunton and six from Waynesboro, would assure equal representation and would make the final decision on a new medical center. This arrangement satisfied Staunton that a new hospital was not a precondition of the merger. A building fund would be established for the planning, design, and construction of a new centrally located hospital as soon as financially feasible. The fund would consist of all available funds of WCH and KDH, except \$4 million set aside as an operating fund for AHC. The fund could only be used for building a new centrally located hospital unless approved by two-thirds of the AHC Board of Directors. That clause assured Waynesboro's board that its \$9.4 million building fund reserve, held at the end of fiscal year 1988, would not be used to renovate KDH.

Full legal approval for the merger came on April 7, 1988, as the members (contributors of \$50 or more) of WCH Inc. voted 421-10 and the KDH Board of Corporators voted 125-50 for the merger. Hopeman described the WCH vote a anticlimactic, with 120 members present and the remainder taken by proxy.

The Staunton meeting, held at John Lewis Auditorium, went on for hours with the crowd dwindling from 185 to 150 as the meeting went on and arguments pro and con were heard. Corporators had been mailed the merger agreement on March 11; many felt they didn't yet understand it well enough to make a decision. Frank Pancake, a founding member of the Coalition for Health Care Awareness, attempted to delay the vote by 60 days to allow more time for analysis, but his motion failed.

A joint press release issued April 7 by both hospitals stated, "Augusta Hospital Corporation will operate both hospitals, allocating resources, determining service configurations and dealing with the health care problems facing our area. At present, there will be no physical merger of the two hospitals. The hospitals will continue to operate as King's Daughters' Hospital and Waynesboro Community Hospital. It is intending that eventually a new hospital located centrally between the two cities will be constructed when financially feasible. However, the final decision regarding plans for a new hospital will be made by the new board of directors."

Cooper was named president and chief executive officer of AHC; Flanagan, vice president. Flanagan was first offered AHC's top position but had turned it down in favor of early retirement in December 1988 and a continued consulting role with AHC.

## **The Board Makes Its Final Decision**

The merger of KDH and WCH as Augusta Hospital Corporation was only the first step in a series of hurdles needed for a new medical center. Kathleen Heatwole, AHC's vice president for planning, said each stage was mired in controversy and outcome was sometimes suspect. In Staunton opposition was strong to relinquishing the community hospital and opponents of a Fishersville site threatened each state of approval; roads, zoning, and the certificate of public need. In addition, the reorganization of the AHC administrative staff and departmental managers was a difficult process.

In July 1988 AHC's new board hired consultants from Price Waterhouse to take a fresh, objective look at their options and assist in planning. Heatwole said at a three-day hospital retreat, a Price Waterhouse consultant drew a series of boxes representing an optimal organizational structure for AHC. Obviously, there were far more people in the room than represented in the boxes, she recalled. Each hospital had its own staff and department managers; where two jobs had existed, in most cases only one managerial position would be needed. The merger would result in a loss of managerial jobs and lowered morale during that time.

Nonetheless, decisions were being made and planning continued. In September 1988 AHC bought 131 acres for \$924,270—land conveniently located near Interstate 64 and Route 250, just off Route 608 in Fishersville. WCH had taken options on the land earlier, and the options were up. At the time of purchase Smith, as board chairman, publicly stated it was advantageous to buy the land for investment purposes, whether or not a hospital was built.

Richard Bonin, retired chief executive officer of American Safety Razor in Verona, was named board chairman in October of 1988. (Bonin had served on the KDH Board of Trustees for two separate four-year terms and on the WCH/KDH negotiating team.) He asked Hopeman, head of the AHC planning committee, with input from Price Waterhouse, to recommend one of these four options to the AHC board by the end of January 1989:

- 1) Continue to operate both facilities as full-service acute care hospitals, each with a 78-bed capacity.
- 2) Close KDH, renovate and expand WCH as a 150-bed facility.
- 3) Close WCH, renovate and expand KDH as a 150-bed facility.
- 4) Build a new hospital in Fishersville. The initial plans had called for a 225-bed hospital costing \$45 million. Later plans were changed to a 150-bed facility with the capacity to add to the structure in 25-30 bed increments.



Following a "decision analysis" format used in business and industry, Bonin had the planning committee separate health care criteria into "musts, wants, cost and other." "Musts" included continuing the current level of health care, financial feasibility and accreditation. "Wants" included high quality health care, medical staff, professional staff, technology and ambience. "Costs" included annual income and cash flow, "Other" included community acceptance, flexibility, competition and market share, range of services and accessibility.

By this time the fate of the hospitals was the most-discussed topic in Augusta County. Numerous letters to the editor debated reasons for and against; the Committee for Health Care Awareness formed in the fall of 1988 to save KDH. In an effort to educate the public, AHC officials were meeting with numerous civic groups, mailing out quarterly publications called "Partners," and placing a series of informative newspaper ads on hospital options. In mid-January AHC also hired a consulting firm to interview small groups of residents in both cities and various Augusta locations. The consultants asked people what hospital they would go to if the one they presently used closed.

As of Jan. 26 civic groups meeting Bonin reported the results of the survey. If consolidation occurred at WCH, 13-20 percent of Staunton residents who use KDH would go to other hospitals; if consolidation occurred at KDH, 12-15 percent who use WCH would go elsewhere. A Feb. 12 AHC newspaper ad stated, "The survey also indicated that such a loss of patients would not occur with a new centrally located hospital."

Utilizing the decision analysis process and Price Waterhouse data, the AHC planning commission (an 11-member body comprised of two Staunton community members, one Waynesboro community member, two WCH physicians, one WCH physician who was also an AHC board member, three KDH physicians, and two AHC board members) continued their study. AHC's Feb. 12 newspaper ad stated that a joint center in Fishersville would produce the greatest cost savings over a 25-year period, of \$24.4 million. Consolidating at KDH would save \$15.8 million consolidating at WCH would lose \$3.1 million; renovating both hospitals would involve a negative \$41.7 million.

Staunton community leaders were divided; City Council was torn. *The Daily News Leader* endorsed consolidating at KDH as a first step. "This would give AHC time to integrate and develop two staffs into one. We question the \$28 million figure being used as the amount necessary to convert KDH from a primarily in-patient hospital to a primarily out-patient facility," stated a Feb. 12 *News Leader* editorial. A February readers' poll

drew 615 responses: Overwhelmingly, readers wanted to continue both hospitals (528 responses); 66 wanted to consolidate in Staunton, and 21 favored a new regional hospital.

At a Feb. 22 community meeting in Fishersville AHC said the planning committee had narrowed the options to two: consolidating at KDH or building a new hospital. That same day the committee voted 9-2 to recommend a new hospital.

On March 1, 1989, AHC's Board of Directors, in a two-hour closed meeting at KDH, voted unanimously for the new hospital. Representatives of Staunton's Committee for Health Care Awareness had presented 4,300 signatures against the new hospital to KDH that afternoon. In a March 3 *News Leader* editorial, Bonin wrote, "There is no joy in this decision because, when fully implemented, it will be the end of an era for King's Daughters' and Waynesboro Community hospitals which have served us all so very well. Also, there is no joy because, for many of you, it has caused resentment, anger, frustration and a sense of loss. I don't know where we failed in our communications to you or whether you failed to listen. Perhaps it was a little of both."

### **The Certificate of Public Need Process**

The controversy continued to heat up in Staunton as citizens rallied around KDH. In August the Coalition for Health Care Awareness (the group had changed its name from "committee" in May) announced a \$50,000 campaign to save the hospital. On Aug. 9 the KDH medical staff passed a resolution 44-0 supporting the new medical center but calling for the CEO's resignation. The necessary belt-tightening measures and the style in which there were issued had made Cooper an unpopular administrator. "It never worked from a personality viewpoint. The Medical staff and press were against him from the beginning," said Bonin.

Amidst allegations that AHC was letting KDH physically run down and providing inadequate staffing, officials from the Virginia Department of Health made a surprise two-day visit to KDH in early October. Their findings were satisfactory, but the public was not totally convinced.

In light of continued controversy the Staunton-Augusta Chamber of Commerce had conducted two-month fact-finding mission including interviews with AHC, KDH, and the CHCA. On Oct. 17 the chamber endorsed the new hospital but with three recommendations. Criticizing AHC for poor community relations, the report asked AHC to recognize its responsibility to improve in that area. It also asked for funds for non-emergency transportation of the elderly and indigent and for an aggressive plan to consider alternative uses for KDH.

And so the process went, successes tempered by setbacks. AHC displayed a poor financial performance for 1989 due to rising operational costs. Income from operations was down to 55 percent to about \$1.6 million. Inpatient census fell 15 percent. To cut costs, a hiring freeze had been instituted in August. AHC announced plans in November 1989 to eliminate 100 positions through attrition by the next quarter. KDH's security department and AHC's marketing department were eliminated; dietary and office personnel were reduced at both KDH and WCH.

But in spite of the setbacks, progress was being made. Ellerbe Beckett of Washington, D.C., was selected as the architect for a \$2.1 million design in late November. On Feb. 14, 1990, the Augusta County Board of Supervisors approved Virginia Department of Transportation's six-year road plan that included funding for a 1.3 mile hospital access road connecting Routes 250 and 608.

Two separate parties undertook two additional surveys. Staunton City Councilman Douglas Wine paid for an April ad in the *Staunton News Leader* asking readers west of Interstate 81 to indicate whether they wanted 1) improvements made to keep KDH in Staunton or 2) KDH closed and a new hospital build in Fishersville. Approximately 3,300 people responded, "Keep KDH in Staunton." In light of the impact of low morale and operational problems, AHC's Medical Executive Committee in May began conducting a confidential survey to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 the areas of nursing, laboratory, X-ray, respiratory therapy, physical therapy, emergency room, pharmacy and administration.

On May 22, 1990, AHC cleared another hurdle. Overturning the Augusta County Planning Commission's recommendation to deny rezoning, the Augusta Board of Supervisors voted 6-1 to approve AHC's request to rezone 126.75 acres at the Fishersville site from agriculture to business.

In May and June the situation with the medical staff came to a head. Results of the confidential survey showed satisfactory to excellent ratings in all medical service areas, whereas the administration rated a "3." On June 12, 1990, Roger Cooper announced he was resigning as chief executive officer of AHC and would step down as president on Sept. 30. Richard Graham, who had been appointed AHC's vice president and chief financial officer in April, was named interim CEO.

"It is clear to me that my role as a 'change agent' during the first two years of our existence has been fulfilled," said Cooper at the press conference announcing his decision. "Over the last two years I have taken on the role of 'change agent' and 'lightening rod' for AHC. During those years,

difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions have had to be made by the board and by the management.”

“However, those difficult decisions made the task of winning support more difficult,” he said. “It is my hope that this change will pave the way for the development of a modern, centrally located hospital in Fishersville in a way that unites our community.”

“There is no question he was the right person for the job at the time,” said Bonin in retrospect. Cooper helped build a strong financial base and proactive plans to move the new medical center forward. At the time of his resignation AHC’s certificate of need documentation was 90 percent complete.

As a neutral third party, Graham, his successor, began to help stabilize the staff situation, garner internal support, and move full-swing into the certificate of public need. Under federal legislation passed in 1974, as well as under state law, health service providers must secure a CON before adding services or capacity. The state health commissioner, by law, rules on the CON after reviewing approximately 20 factors and the recommendation of the regional health planning agency. Without that approval, a new hospital could not be built.

In mid-July the Waynesboro-East Augusta Chamber of Commerce gave the CON a boost when it endorsed the new medical center. A poll was conducted among chamber members, with 119 approving and 21 opposing the plan. Two informational sessions with AHC officials and a radio call-in show on WANV-AM had helped support the need for a new hospital.

On July 27 AHC confirmed the number of beds needed would be at least 50 percent higher than the 150 projected by Price Waterhouse. The number was leaked to the press from an internal memo written by Heatwole. The number requested in the CON would be increased to 225, with a capacity for 285 if needed. The planning team had been putting together the bed complement since early 1990, Heatwole said, trying to be sure the number would suffice. The number of beds, she emphasized, was never the critical factor; the volume for the emergency room, physical therapy, radiology, and other services most impacts space and cost needs.

AHC formally applied Aug. 7, 1990, for a state license to build a 225-bed medical center in Fishersville, with a contingency license for 285 beds. The 600 page CON application was submitted to Richmond. Costs were estimated at \$50.8 million, construction financing at \$10.7 million, and equipment at \$8 million. The average cost-per-day at the new facility would be about \$50 less in 1994 dollars than at KDH and WCH, said Gra-

ham at an AHC press conference that day. Improved efficiency at the new facility would save AHC about \$7 million per year, he reported. Copies of the CON application were made available at the Augusta County, Staunton and Waynesboro libraries.

At the press conference Joe Parimucha, AHC's project manager from the Ellerbe Beckett firm, presented a preliminary sketch of the proposed facility. Plans called for a multi-story building of private patient rooms with views of the southeast. A horseshoe-shaped main structure would house the emergency department and other ancillary services, administrative and support space.

The approval process for AHC's CON was the most controversial in the state's history; efforts were made to block approval at each step. Staunton City Council went on record Aug. 23 in opposition (a 6-1 vote), sparking another round of editorial clash. *The News-Virginian* criticized the Staunton council for passing its resolution urging denial of the CON, calling any plan to merge hospitals at KDH "political and fiscal suicide." *The Daily News Leader* responded by siding with the Staunton City Council and again presenting arguments for merging at KDH.

AHC revised its CON application from 285 to 225 beds after questions were raised during the review process concerning which figure the application's projections were based upon. AHC voluntarily withdrew the request for the 60 additional beds rather than redo the entire application. On Sept. 10 the Virginia Health Department determined AHC's CON request to be complete. As part of the review process a public hearing was scheduled Oct. 17 at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center in conjunction with the Valley Health Council. The VHC, an affiliate of the Northwest Virginia Health Systems Agency, was to make its recommendation to its parent agency Oct. 18. Council membership was voluntary, and both proponents and opponents of the new hospital had been joining the VWC in recent months to make their votes count.

A flurry of letters to the editor appeared in the Staunton paper. The CHCA mobilized opposition to the hospital with a telephone, mail, and advertising campaign. Carpools were arranged and speakers planned for the Oct. 17 hearing. Expecting a large crowd, The Valley Health Council posted sign-up sheets at the door both for those attending and those wishing to speak. Speakers were limited to five minutes each.

CHCA was dealt a severe blow Oct. 6 when the architect is hired, Edwin Wilson of Roanoke, reported that KDH could serve the area as a



150-bed facility, but not as a hospital with 225 to 285 beds. Wilson had served s KDH's architect in all of its renovations since 1970. His findings were leaked to the media the day of the hearing. CHCA responded by challenging the number of beds actually needed.

The Oct. 17 CON hearing set a record. The four-hour event drew more than 800 people, 88 of whom signed up to speak. Of the 76 who did speak, 39 were health care providers associated with ACH; 53 were in favor of the new center. Proponents included Waynesboro and Staunton Chamber of Commerce directors, former Staunton mayor Nancy O'Hare, lawyers, and businessmen. Opponents included CHCA members, Staunton Mayor William Campbell, city councilmen, and others.

Metaphors were colorful. Pancake likened the scenario to an old Western. "The Hopeman boys over in Waynesboro admire the fair King's Daughters in Staunton so they saddle up and ride over at high noon, intimidate the family and friends of their quarry, seize the attractive and popular Daughters and gallop off toward their hideout in Fishersville. But the good citizens of Staunton and Waynesboro are incensed by this high-handed action and organize posses to head off the Hopemans at the pass."

Dr. Albert Morriss of the KDH medical staff compared the hospital to grandmother's Plymouth: "You love it, but it wouldn't get you to Richmond."

The Rev. Earl Denny of Stuarts Draft described Staunton as a bride and Waynesboro as a groom with her family wanting them to live in Staunton and his side wanting them in Waynesboro. "Let's let them have their own 126-acre estate in Fishersville," he said.

The next day, following hours of debate, the Valley Health Council voted 29-9 to recommend approval of AHC's proposal to the Northwestern Virginia Health Systems Agency. Much of the debate centered on conflict of interest rules and whether AHC officials and CHCA members could vote. In the end they were allowed to participate in debate but not to vote.

Meeting in Culpeper on Nov. 1, the NVHSA, the health agency responsible for local health care planning, voted 21-2 in favor of the CON application. That recommendation was forwarded to State Health Commissioner C.M.G Buttery for a final ruling.

The Virginia Health Department staff then gave AHC a conditional recommendation of approval Nov. 19. They asked AHC to answer questions about reuse plans for KDH and WCH and to clarify the number of operating rooms needed at the new medical center.

On Nov. 19 AHC announced its corporate offices would move to

leased space just off Route 250 in Fishersville, and on Nov. 29 Graham was named CEO effective Jan. 1, 1991.

Only Buttery's final approval was needed to allow the hospital to proceed. On Jan. 3 AHC officials met with state health officials in Richmond for an informal fact-finding commission to examine the CON. Such a hearing is automatically held if there is a significant opposition to a request. Marilyn West, state director of resources development and Buttery's designee, conducted the nearly eight-hour meeting. Questions were raised about AHC's public information effort and its plans to reuse WCH and KDH.

In a final effort to block the new hospital, the United Voter Taxpayers Association urged Staunton residents to write the state health commissioner in opposition to the CON. CHCA also supported the mail-in campaign.

But despite more than 1,000 letters of opposition (and 181 in support) which had poured into the office since August 1990 when AHC submitted its application, on Jan. 31 Buttery supported AHC's request. His approval was conditional on AHC's continuing to work with Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County to develop the new hospital, to carry out a plan of transportation for those unable to drive to the new hospital, and to involve the communities in hospital reuse plans.

From then on it was smooth sailing. The Augusta Board of Supervisors voted unanimously in February to let AHC sell up to \$56 million in Tax-exempt bonds to build the new hospital. Also that month, the CHCA disbanded, distributing its remaining funds to area rescue squads.

The official ground-breaking for Augusta Medical Center was held Aug. 15, 1991. Bids were awarded and construction began. On March 13, 1992, AHC submitted a CON for an additional 30 beds for the new hospital, based on increased patient census and revised projections. This request sailed through VHC approval on May 20 and NVHSA approval on June 4. On May 27, 1992, AHC unveiled the cornerstone for Augusta Medical Center at its annual meeting. In June AHC bought an additional 51 acres at the medical center site for \$296,226, ensuring the right of the way for the access road. State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube gave final approval to the 30 additional beds on July 10, 1992.

An important step in community relations also occurred in 1991-92 when KDH's four hospital auxiliaries merged into one. The Rebecca Ker, Florence Nightingale, Deane Holt, and Emily Smith auxiliaries, each with a long history of volunteerism and support for KDH, became a unified KDH Auxiliary. KDH had been the only hospital in Virginia with more than one such organization. In anticipation of merging with the WCH Auxiliary at the new medical center, the

Joint Auxiliary Council had hired its own consultant to help them reorganize with an eye toward a single AMC auxiliary in the new center.

Finally everything was coming together.

### **Looking Back: Reactions and Reconsiderations**

Although community outcry was lacking in Waynesboro by the time of the merger and decision to build a new hospital, such had not always been the case. Waynesboro, too, had had its share of controversy. The Waynesboro City Council, on the basis of Ernst & Whinney's recommendation of a new hospital outside Waynesboro, had passed a resolution April 27, 1987, asking WCH to stay within the city limits. City Manager Jerry Gwaltney was an outspoken opponent of moving the hospital, and a round of letters to the editors appeared in the *Waynesboro News-Virginian* expressing public opposition in 1987.

Perhaps because the concept of the new hospital was initiated by Waynesboro and because renovating WCH was not a viable option, Waynesboro had accepted and adjusted to the idea when Staunton was still studying it. "I think they (Waynesboro) had adjusted to the idea -- that for the future of health care -- this was the proper move to make," said McClure, co-chairman of Friends of Health Care from 1988-91 and now an AHC board member. "There's no question that the Waynesboro community had a lot more time to digest it than Staunton did." Also, the *News-Virginian* took a cautionary, examine-the-issues-and-options approach which helped WCH, according to McClure. In June 1987 WCH had written a comprehensive, four-part series printed in the newspaper which helped explain the rationale for a new facility.

Following the merger, KDH went through the same stages of denial and anger that Waynesboro had experienced earlier, said Dr. Ron Fischer, president of the WCH medical staff from 1988-89. When Cooper took over in 1983 as WCH administrator and made major organizational changes, the personnel cuts enacted naturally had a strong negative impact on morale, according to Fischer. The computer reports which monitored Medicare expenses were universally resented and disliked. But the WCH medical staff came to respect Cooper for the hospital's subsequent financial performance, he said.

KDH, Fischer said, attempted to do in a short time what WCH did over a lengthy period. He believes the KDH medical staff ultimately was able to adjust faster to the changes than WCH had.

Dr. Michael Hanna, president of the KDH medical staff in 1988, had participated in the Jennings, Ryan, Federa study which recommended a joint hospital. Many on the KDH staff felt one facility made sense, but they thought

KDH could be renovated for that purpose, he said. With the assurance that the new AHC board would thoroughly investigate the options, the KDH staff agreed to merge.

The two medical staffs were very different, Hanna said. Staunton physicians had more solo practices and were generally "low key, quietly striving for excellence." The KDH staff from the beginning had doubts about the new administrative style but were assured by WCH physicians that Cooper was a good administrator, Hanna said. As organizational and operational changes were made the morale suffered, the KDH staff got more and more restless, according to Hanna. The WCH medical staff, on the other hand, supported Cooper to almost to the end.

As Cooper's successor, Graham was able to begin turning the climate around, according to Bonin. He was not aligned with either community, and he provided a strong voice of support for physicians, helping to recover morale with a new, low-key approach. "Finance follows good operation; it doesn't lead it," is how Graham described his philosophy.

Hospital morale improved, and the medical staff became united in support of the new facility, Hanna and Fischer said. Managers and health care employees were involved in planning for the new center; a sense of excitement and anticipation began to replace the former sense of loss.

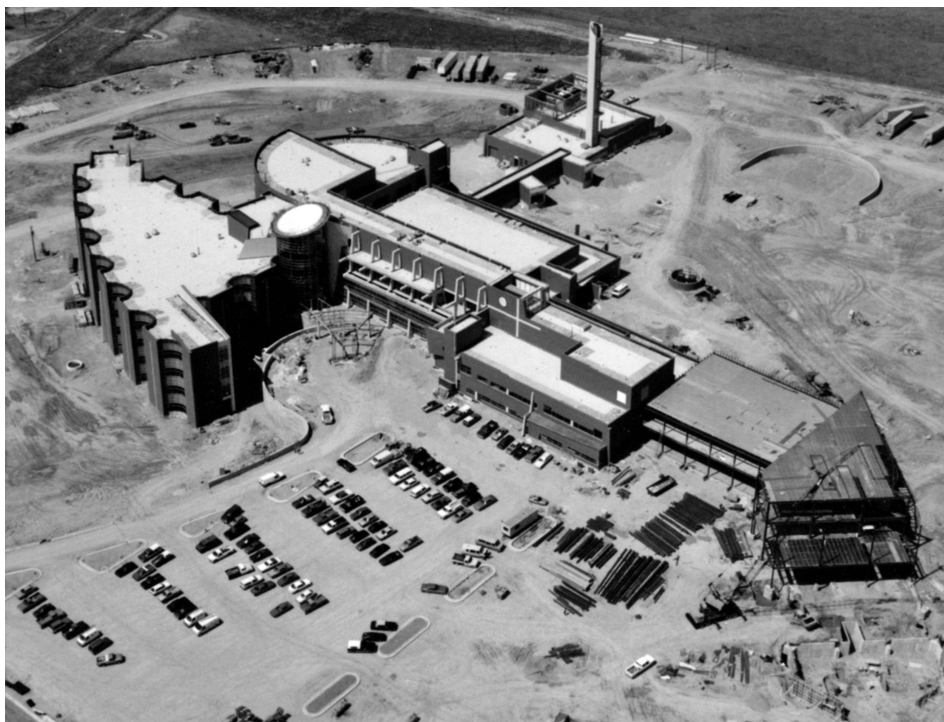
The city of Staunton was harder to win over; the opposition was much stronger than in Waynesboro and well organized. "The hospital has been the core of this town," said Ann McPherson, KDH board member from 1980-88 and co-chairman of the Friends of Health Care from its inception. Nearly everyone in Staunton has either gone to KDH or supported it in some way; the emotional ties are strong, she said. In a way, Flanagan's rapport with the corporators and volunteers hurt AHC because they felt their hospital had been taken away, she said.

Frank Pancake, a founder of CHCA, agreed. Ever since KDH opened, people contributed to their hospital as a source of great pride. The annual corporator's meetings were well attended; people had a genuine interest in what went on at KDH.

"There was a very close relationship between the people who made the decisions and those who ran things," said Eleanor Patrick, CHCA chairman.

"I think to this day that most of the corporators did not understand that when they voted for this merger they were voting themselves out of business," said Pancake in a June 4, 1992, interview. "All of a sudden instead of being a community project, it was a corporate board."

Pancake said he considered the idea of a combined facility a good one



*An aerial view of hospital construction. (Courtesy Augusta Health)*

from the start, but that since KDH was in good shape, he felt it should serve that purpose. “I think only time will tell whether the decision was a good one, basically on whether it works out to be financially sound,” he said. “- Naturally, none of us wants the hospital to fail, and it won’t, said Patrick.

In the final analysis, could anything have been done to improve public relations and prevent the heavy price paid by strong emotional ties to the community hospitals?” Some hospital leaders think the controversy was inevitable; all involved have thought long and hard about what might have made the process smoother. Some of the “what if” considerations have been:

- Allowing the KDH corporators more time to decide on the merger.
- Retaining the corporators for a period of time as part of AHC.
- Providing more information to the community at each step of the process.
- Keeping an AHC public relations person on staff throughout the controversy.
- If Flanagan had agreed to accept the CEO position for a six-month adjustment period.
- If a neutral CEO had been hired from ACH’s inception.
- If the idea of a combined facility had been approached differently to Staunton.
- If the *Daily News Leader* had remained neutral, rather than taking a stand to keep KDH.



Of course, there is no way of knowing if any of these measures could have made the process a smoother one. The focus, as it should be, is on the future of Augusta Medical Center and its success as a regional health facility.

### **Key Dates**

**June 19, 1986** WCH announces it is hiring Ernst & Whinney for long-range planning.

**January 1987** Ernst & Whinney reports the best option is a regional facility between Staunton and Waynesboro.

**July 2, 1987** Memorial Hospital, Inc., WCH's ownership board, votes for a regional hospital.

**October 22, 1987** Jennings, Ryan, Federa & Co. tells KDH it is self-liquidating and should merge with WCH.

**October & November 1988** Committee for Health Care Awareness forms to oppose new hospital.

**March 10, 1988** KDH Board of Trustees and Memorial Hospital Inc. approve merger agreement.

**April 7, 1988** KDH Board of Corporators and WCH Inc. approve merger agreement, forming Augusta Hospital Corp.

**September 1988** AHC buys 131 acres in Fishersville.

**Feb. 22, 1989** AHC Planning Committee votes 9-2 to recommend a regional hospital in Fishersville.

**March 1, 1989** HC Board of Directors votes unanimously for the regional hospital.

**October 25, 1989** Staunton Chamber of Commerce endorses new hospital.

**November 30, 1989** AHC announces Ellerbe Beckett of Washington, D.C. is the architectural firm for the hospital design.

**February 14, 1990** Augusta Board of Supervisors approved the state plan which includes the hospital access road.

**May 22, 1990** Augusta Board of Supervisors approves rezoning of land for the hospital site.

**June 12, 1990** Roger Cooper resigns as CEO. Richard Graham is named interim.

**July 18, 1990** Waynesboro/East Augusta Chamber of Commerce endorses the new hospital.

**October 17, 1990** Information released that Coalition for Health Care Awareness architect finds KDH unsuitable for 225 beds. Valley Health Agency's four-hour public hearing held.

**October 18, 1990** The Valley Health Council, 29-9, votes to recommend ACH's CON.

- November 1, 1990** The Northwestern Virginia Health Systems Agency recommends approval, 21-2.
- November 19, 1990** ACH gets conditional approval of CON from Virginia Department of Health staff.
- November 29, 1990** Graham is named AHC CEO, effective Jan. 1.
- January 3, 1991** AHC meet with state health officials in informal fact-finding interview.
- January 31, 1991** State Health Commissioner C.M.G. Buttery announces decision to grant CON.
- February 3, 1991** Augusta County Industrial Authority votes 6-1 to allow sale of tax-free bonds for hospital.
- February 1991** CHCA disbands.
- August 15, 1991** Ground-breaking ceremony at Fishersville site.
- March 13, 1992** AHC applies for CON for additional 30 beds.
- May 27, 1992** Augusta Medical Center's cornerstone is unveiled at annual board meeting.
- July 10, 1992** State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube approves the additional 30-bed request for Augusta Medical Center.

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# Augusta Health Celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary

By Nancy T. Sorrells

*Editor's Note: The following article began as three articles were written by Nancy Sorrells for inclusion in a special newspaper section printed by The News Virginian newspaper in Waynesboro in September of 2019. The publication commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the Augusta Health medical center in Fishersville.*

## **Augusta Health built on legacy of medical vision**

In September, Augusta Health will celebrate its twenty-fifth birthday. In just a quarter of a century, the consolidated community hospital has gained a national reputation as a state-of-the art facility with a vision of being the best community health system in Virginia. And as wonderful as the hospital was in 1994, it is even more so today as it improves the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in our region on a daily basis.

But the Augusta Medical Center, as it was called when it opened in 1994, did not spring from a vacuum. Rather, it was built on a foundation of medical vision, compassion, and caring that stretches back to the 1700s. Several famous doctors practiced in Staunton in the eighteenth century, including Dr. William Fleming, a Revolutionary War soldier and a statesman, and, perhaps the most famous medical professional from that period, Dr. Alexander Humphreys, who trained in Scotland and practiced medicine in Staunton from 1783-1802. His medical school in Staunton produced many pioneering physicians in a variety of specialties including abdominal surgery and the use of vaccines.

During the Civil War (1861-1865) both Staunton and Waynesboro provided medical care in established hospitals where thousands of sick and injured combatants from both the north and south were tended. In Waynesboro, the office of Dr. James Fulton became a hospital during the war (today it is owned by the Wayne Theatre).

Although those war hospitals ceased to exist at the conclusion of hostilities, their existence helped shift public thinking about where medical care should take place. Before the Civil War, people were cared for in their own homes, but after the war people came to understand that nursing and physician care should take place at a hospital.



*This King's Daughters' Hospital on Frederick Street was replaced by a more modern facility on North Augusta in 1951. (Photo courtesy of Historic Staunton Foundation)*

Of the two cities, Staunton was first to open a modern hospital facility. The impetus was borne out of tragedy when a train wreck at the depot left one passenger dead and fifteen injured. The injured were cared for in private homes, but the community realized there was a need for a public hospital. Fundraising efforts launched after the train accident were inspired by a pin on the clothing of the woman who had died in the wreck. It was a King's Daughters' pin signifying membership in the international nursing circle dedicated to providing nursing services to the downtrodden.

Inspired by the example of such a noble cause, local citizens raised enough money to open a hospital named King's Daughters' Hospital (KDH) in 1896. The hospital, funded totally from charitable contributions, was located in a two-story frame house on Frederick Street. Staff consisted of one nurse, one student nurse, a matron, and a cook.

Within a few years the need for a larger facility became evident. In 1905, a larger, brick facility arose on East Frederick on land that today is part of Mary Baldwin University's campus. The dedication for the state-of-the-art facility took place in 1905.

KDH served the community well for nearly half a century, but returning soldiers and the baby boom of the 1950s stretched the hospital beyond its limits. A community fund drive raised \$2.5 million dollars and a modern 117-bed plant was built on North Augusta Street in 1951.

Waynesboro's first community hospital came in 1932 when Dr. Bliss



*Nurses stand in front of the old King's Daughters' Hospital on Frederick Street. (Courtesy Augusta County Historical Society)*



K. Weems teamed up with Dr. D. Edward Watkins to open up a small private hospital on Wayne Avenue to provide minor surgery, obstetrics, and general medical care. Dr. Weems purchased the old Loth home and turned it into a ten-bed facility. Women who chose to have their children born in the hospital were charged two dollars a day and stayed about ten days.

Within just a few years the hospital was too small to serve the needs of a growing Waynesboro community, so the two doctors recruited several others to team up and build a thirty-bed brick facility on West Main Street in 1937 (today it is McDow Funeral Home). It opened as a privately owned hospital, but the constraints of the Great Depression caused financial distress. The local doctors turned their financial interests over to the community and made the hospital a public non-profit facility called Waynesboro Community Hospital (WCH).

Feeling the same baby boomer pressures that Staunton felt in the 1950s, thoughts turned again toward creating a larger hospital. Construction company owner and community leader B.C. Hopeman pledged \$350,000 toward a new hospital and a fund-raising campaign was launched. Eventually one million dollars was raised and in 1955 a new sixty-bed facility was opened on Oak Avenue (today it is Summit Square). It is worth pointing



*What is today the McDow Funeral Home (bottom photo) was Waynesboro Community Hospital (top photo) from 1937-1955. (Photos courtesy Waynesboro Public Library)*

out that all of the million dollars came from private donations. There was no government funding and in 1955 the new hospital opened debt free.

In 1988, when plans began emerging for a consolidated facility in Fishersville, both hospitals were revered and long-standing community institutions. After 1955, WCH had expanded in 1959, 1964, 1967, 1975, and 1979. It was a 171-bed, 132,000 square foot facility at the time of consolidation.

KDH had also enlarged and expanded over the years, adding on in 1959, 1965, 1970, and 1977. In 1988 it was licensed for 243 beds in a 202,000 square foot facility.

KDH and WCH are considered the “legacy” hospitals that merged to become what today is known as Augusta Health. But even the legacy hospitals were built on a long-standing tradition of medical care and compassion in our region that stretches back to the earliest settlement.

### **Augusta Health nurse witnessed birth of new hospital**

When a woman gives birth to a baby it is often described as beautiful and life-changing in one breath and as painful and difficult in the next. And, upon reflection, the difficult and unsettling journey makes the new life all the more precious and worth the effort.

The same thing can be said for the “birth” of Augusta Health. When the doors to the \$58 million, 255-bed, nearly 400,000-square foot hospital opened in Fishersville on September 11, 1994, it set off a community celebration sparked by pride in an amazing accomplishment. It also brought closure to what had been a painful and difficult process that marked the end of two beloved community hospitals.

Looking back through the lens of 25 years and seeing how that regional hospital has grown into a health care force that provides some of the finest community medical care in the nation, it is hard to remember the tumultuous times leading up to September of 1994...just like the painful moments of birth often fade and are replaced by memories of watching children grow up and go on to do wonderful things in life.

Linda Gail Johnson, an employee wellness nurse at Augusta Health, understands the hospital’s journey more than most because she lived through it. She was a nurse at King’s Daughters’ and then at Waynesboro Community Hospital (WCH). She was also a nurse with the Augusta Health Corporation as the two hospitals merged and struggled with whether or not to close the hospitals in the two cities and build a regional hospital in a

*Linda Gail Johnson, a nurse at Augusta Health, has been a part of the regional hospital's journey from the start, having worked at both the Staunton and Waynesboro hospitals as well as being a part of Augusta Health from its inception. (Photo by Nancy Sorrells),*



cornfield in Fishersville. And she was at the new hospital on September 11 when it opened and has continued to be a part of the story as the hospital has grown into adulthood.

But Johnson's story goes back much further than the controversy that brewed in the 1980s. She grew up in New Hope, graduated from Fort Defiance High School, and then got her nursing degree at Eastern Mennonite on a scholarship from King's Daughters' Hospital (KDH) in Staunton.

Upon graduation, she started on the fourth floor of KDH without any orientation whatsoever. "I will never forget the first day. I had never been on the unit and I had a full assignment of the worst patients. I didn't even know where the thermometers were. It was sink or swim," she remembered.

Eventually she became head nurse at the hospital and was there until 1987. By then controversy was already brewing. The story of how Augusta Health came to be really begins in the early 1980s when small community hospitals across the nation began facing radical changes in health insurance that threatened the fiscal stability of healthcare facilities. That, coupled with rapid (and expensive) changes in science, technology, and computers meant hospitals could not continue doing things the way it had always been done.

## **It began in Waynesboro**

The idea for what eventually became a regional hospital originated in Waynesboro at WCH. Faced with rising costs and the need to update and expand the aging hospital, the board hired a consultant to help them decide how to face the future. In January of 1987 the consultant delivered the grim news that fixing up the hospital on Oak Avenue would mean squeezing in the updates and renovations where they fit rather than where they would do the most good. In other words, it would be a Band-aide approach. At the same time the consultants predicted that the area could not continue to support two small community hospitals. The recommendation was that a regional hospital should be built, preferably with cooperation from KDH.

“It wasn’t a revolution. It wasn’t a bolt from the blue,” said Roger Cooper, WCH administrator, of the decision to build fresh. “Those trends were coming together.”

In July of 1987, the Waynesboro board voted to support a regional hospital and reached out to the board of directors at KDH about a potential merger. The concern was that a larger, more regional hospital would put King’s Daughters’ out of business and no one wanted that to happen. The situation quickly became volatile. KDH, which had been considering expansion as well, rejected the offer.

Meanwhile, KDH was engaged in some long-range studies with a consultant as well. In October of 1987 the consultant reported that the hospital could only expect to raise \$1.1 million of the estimated \$9 million it would need for renovation and expansion. Further, it recommended that KDH and WCH merge.

“The whole report shook up us and brought us increasingly around to thinking of a merger,” said Richard Smith, president of the KDH Board of Trustees.

## **Two hospitals become one**

The fall of 1987 might have been the darkest moment in Augusta Health’s birth. The boards of the two hospitals entered into a negotiating phase regarding a merger, but the leaders on both sides remembered feeling like a gun was to their heads. In March of 1988 the two hospitals agreed to merge and form Augusta Hospital Corporation. In September the new corporation bought acreage in Fishersville.

Rumors were rampant that WCH was “trying to force KDH out of business,” and even the editors of the two city newspapers got into a duel about what the future of the area community health care would be. At this point, the idea of having a regional hospital in Fishersville was far from a done deal.



There were several possible outcomes facing the new merged corporation: The two hospitals could remain as separate local non-profit hospitals with the reality that one or both would probably not survive the changing healthcare scene. The two hospitals could merge programmatically and fiscally but the two branches could continue to operate in Staunton and Waynesboro. A new, up-to-date regional hospital could be built with the two city hospitals remaining open to provide selective non-hospital services. A, finally, a new regional hospital could be built with the understanding that KDH and WCH would close their doors when those of the new hospital opened.

Johnson was head nurse at KDH during the roughest days of those talks. Staunton and western Augusta County reacted most harshly to talks of the fourth option. She saw the bumper stickers saying "Read my lips. No new hospital." She watched as the Committee for Health Care Awareness was formed in Staunton to oppose any new hospital, and she would have read the letters to the editor that warned that a new hospital and the subsequent closure of KDH would make Staunton a "medical ghost town."

In 1987 Johnson left KDH and started work at the health department. She then got married and moved to North Carolina. In 1989, after spending only a short time in North Carolina, the Johnsons decided they wanted to come back to the Valley. The first job that came open was as nursing supervisor at Waynesboro Community Hospital.

### **Community tension**

"There was a lot of tension in the medical community," she remembered of 1987-1989. "The merger talks were happening when we left. When I came back I came as 'the nurse from North Carolina' not as the 'nurse from KDH,' and it was a real blessing."

By the time she came back to the area, the new hospital corporation had voted to build a regional hospital in Fishersville but the struggles between the old guard and the new were still going on even as the hospital leadership began the arduous task of merging two systems into one.

"It was them or us for a while," remembered Johnson. "All in all it really worked, but some people couldn't make the change and moved on. In the long run if you looked at the big picture, it all made sense and we knew deep down that two hospitals couldn't survive. I have to give it to the leadership who set it in motion. They had us get acquainted with the staffs from the other hospital, we learned each other's procedures, especially the nurses because they would do things one way and we did

it a different way. It was just little things like when you take a patient's temperature," she said.

She remembers that it was a lot of work but that it all paid off. "There was a lot of team building and purposefully making staff divide time between the two hospitals. They intentionally had people swap locations and get to know the people and the procedures in the other hospital."

Johnson points out that it wasn't just the staff at the two hospitals getting to know and like each other. Since the earliest days of the Valley's settlement there had always been competitive tension between Staunton and Waynesboro culturally and governmentally. And with the idea of building a regional hospital in Fishersville, Augusta County became a third party in the mix. If the plan was to work, the county supervisors would be the ones who would have to approve site plans and support the rezoning and infrastructure construction including new roads and utilities.

Petitions, letters, and surveys strongly opposed the closing of the two community hospitals and the building of the regional hospital. One survey in the spring of 1990 counted 3,300 people who wanted to keep KDH in Staunton while just a handful supported closing KDH and building in Fishersville.

By the summer of 1990, many of the hurdles of local government and chamber of commerce support had been cleared and the merged hospital corporation applied for a certificate of public need to build a new regional hospital. Many in Staunton were still reluctant to embrace the idea. The Staunton City Council actually voted to block the certificate. The furor culminated in a record-breaking four-hour certificate of need public hearing. Although there were many, including Staunton's mayor, speaking against the certificate, more saw the writing on the wall in regard to the future of small community hospitals. Dr. Albert Morris compared KDH to his grandmother's old Plymouth: "You love it, but it wouldn't get you to Richmond." The Rev. Earl Denny of Stuarts Draft compared the merger to a wedding with Staunton as the bride and Waynesboro as the groom with her family wanting them to live in Staunton and his in Waynesboro. "Let's let them have their own 126-acre estate in Fishersville," he said.

The next day, following hours of debate, the Valley Health Council voted 29-9 to recommend approval of the certificate. Final approval happened in November of 1990 and shortly thereafter, AHC moved its corporate offices to Fishersville and named Dick Graham (who had been acting CEO) as CEO effective January 1, 1991.

As Bert Hopeman, the Waynesboro businessman and former chair of the AHC's planning committee remembered, "If the solution hadn't been so overwhelmingly correct, it never would have happened. Because of the agonizing emotions involved, everybody wanted an alternate solution."

### **Groundbreaking in a cornfield**

Groundbreaking for Augusta Medical Center took place on August 15, 1991, but the corporation had been participating in community outreach since the merger was announced more than three years earlier. Nurse Johnson's career path seemed to follow the emergence of the new hospital. "In 1991, I took a job with them as the community wellness coordinator and held that position until 2012," she said.

Part of her new job was to take an Augusta Health van out into the community and to workplaces to conduct health screenings and provide health education. "I remember going to the corporate office in the old DMV building in Fishersville to pick up the van. Dick Graham dropped the keys in my hand and said 'Go and do good,'" she said.

Once the certificate of need was issued and the first shovel of dirt was turned, the communities began coming together to embrace the new hospital. "We all came out for the first shovel in that cornfield. It was hard to get our heads around the fact that there was really going to be a hospital there, but the transition teams had already started," she remembered. "Somebody had to make decisions as to whose forms we were going to use and who was going to head each department. The team looked at the transition of people, forms, processes, and procedures."

### **A new journey begins**

According to Johnson, everything changed once the hospital started going up. "It was exciting and my sense is that the coming together of the two hospitals happened pretty quickly after that. Moving day was quite an endeavor and well planned. It was a synchronized symphony. As for the staff, we had gotten through the trauma previously and jelled as a group with a new endeavor. We were like, 'Wow' we didn't know this place was so big. There was new equipment, and a new sparkly place, and the patients were excited too," she recalled.

That was twenty-five years ago. Johnson retired from Augusta Health in 2012 and she and her husband left the area for a few years. After traveling, she took a nursing job in Kentucky for a while. In 2016 they returned to Virginia and in 2017, Johnson returned to nursing part-time at Augusta Health, where she remains today as an employee health nurse.

*Balloons drop in the main entrance of the brand new Augusta Medical Center in 1994 as administrators and dignitaries celebrate the opening of a new regional hospital. (Courtesy Augusta Health)*



As she reflects back on her personal nursing journey and how it has intertwined with that of Augusta Health's story, she is pleased with the outcome. "We were so fortunate to have the leadership to envision something like we have here. We could not have had the array of services as small independent hospitals. Each would have been swallowed up and competing with the other. My dream is that we stay an independent community hospital and stay true to our mission about serving the community. There were challenges, but most of it was for the better. And Augusta Health still has a strong presence in the two cities and we still have community outreach beyond these walls. The services are close and connected and we are a full-service hospital," she said in summary.

And as for her personal journey? "I was talking to some young nurses today and told them to keep in mind that nursing has lots of options. There is always a new path and I have enjoyed all of it. It has been quite an adventure and I have had a lot of different opportunities at Augusta Health," she concluded.

### **First surgery patient remembers "new smell"**

For Iris Holmes the memory that is seared in her mind is the "new

smell” as she was whisked into the brand-new Augusta Medical Center in the morning hours of September 12, 1994. Not many minutes later she underwent emergency life-saving surgery for an ectopic pregnancy that had ruptured, almost certainly making her the first surgery performed at the newly-opened hospital.

“As we went through the ER doors I clearly remember that everything smelled new – like a new car smell. There was new paint and new furniture. They say that in those ‘life moments’ sometimes you actually remember the smell more than anything. I just distinctly remember the new smell. I also remember that everyone was trying to figure out where to put me. Within forty minutes they had me in surgery,” recalled Iris of the day when she nearly lost her life.

In many ways, the medical service and personal care provided to Iris and her husband Steve on that day twenty-five years ago were symbolic of the very reason why there was a state-of-the-art new medical facility in Fishersville in the first place. After a protected struggle and years of planning, the last days of summer in August and September of 1994 were all about celebration that rolled into quiet professionalism when the hospital doors opened for business.

A month earlier, in the middle of August, the dedication had taken place. “This beautiful building called the Augusta Medical Center is truly a spiritual space,” Dr. Gerry Martin, president of the medical staff, had said at the ceremonies. “Here lives will begin, mend, and end,” he added, noting that the hospital was “a strong statement of stewardship of the medical resources of our area and it follows the thoughtful medical care legacy which is ours...”



*Steve and Iris Holmes remember their experience at the new hospital in Fishersville when Iris had emergency surgery during the first hours that the hospital was open. (Photo by Nancy Sorrells)*



## CITY, COUNTY NEWS

# AMC employees celebrate a moving experience



FOURTEEN ambulances from throughout the area including Grohows, Fairfield and Rockfish Valley in Nelson County are lined up in front of Waynesboro Community Hospital waiting turns to transport patients.



UNLOADING — One of the first two ambulances unload a patient at the entrance to Augusta Medical Center Sunday morning. The move was started at 7 a.m. and completed at approximately 10:30.



WAYNE DAVIS, director of communications at AMC, and other employees applaud each other at the announcement of the completion of the move of Waynesboro hospital patients to the new facilities shortly before 11 a.m. Sunday.

**Photos  
by  
Dennis  
Sutton**



THE MANY ambulances that started off at Waynesboro Community Hospital early Sunday morning line up again to deliver the patients to Augusta Medical Center.

*This portion of a page in the Daily News Leader for September 12, 1994, documents the opening of the regional hospital in Fishersville.*

The dedication was followed several days later with a community open house so the public could actually experience the new facility that they had heard about and read about for a long time. Ironically, Iris Holmes was among those from the public who toured the new facility. "I remember going and touring and thinking it was top notch," she recalled.

The actual move from the two legacy hospitals— King's Daughters' Hospital in Staunton and Waynesboro Community Hospital (— to the new facility took countless hours of planning over many months. The two-phase move was accomplished quickly and seamlessly over the course of consecutive Sundays.

At 6:55 a.m. on Sunday, September 11, 1994, fourteen ambulances from area first aid crews began moving patients from Waynesboro to AMC.

The first arrived at 7:10 a.m. and the last of the twenty-six patients rolled into the new hospital at 9:30 a.m. The newspapers noted that there were “applause and cheers” and Neysa Simmers, the chair of the Move Steering Committee, noted that the “move could not have gone more efficiently.”

Those Waynesboro patients, however, were not the first to be treated at AMC. At 5 a.m. that morning, more than two hours before the first patient from Waynesboro arrived, the ER had opened its doors and the first patient was treated just a few minutes later.

Meanwhile, on that day, Iris Holmes had been feeling fine and was fine when she went to bed, but at 3 a.m. she awoke with a dull pain in her belly. “I got out of bed so I wouldn’t wake everyone up and sat in the living room. It just got worse and worse. I finally woke my husband up around 4:30 or 5 a.m.,” she remembered.

Iris worked for a physician so she called him and he said to meet him at his office. After a quick going over he said he thought the problem was gynecological and sent the couple to a Waynesboro specialist. By this time it was 8 a.m. and her pain had increased dramatically. That doctor’s exam determined that Iris had a pregnancy in her fallopian tube that had ruptured and she was bleeding internally. The Waynesboro First Aid Crew was called and she was whisked to Augusta Health.

“We had two boys at the time who were twelve and nine years old,” said Iris, who is now fifty-six. “I didn’t even know that I was pregnant! I don’t think I understood how serious it was until I got into the ER and I was hearing them plan the surgery and then I knew how serious it was. It was scary. I remember asking my husband to take care of the kids if I didn’t make it,” she said.

Her husband Steve, fifty-six, also remembers that morning. “First I remember trying to follow the ambulance to the hospital because I didn’t know exactly where I was going. Then I remember one of the doctors asking if I was alright. I guess I was pretty worried,” he said. And what about his wife’s request to take care of the kids? “I think I just said, ‘Don’t tell me that.’”

Although there is no way to know for sure if Iris was in fact the very first patient to have surgery at the new hospital, the records do show that she was among the first. In addition, multiple members of the medical staff told her that day that she was the first.

“Four or five nurses told me that I was the first one to be operated on at the new hospital and my doctor who did the surgery, Dr. Randolph

Mahnesmith, told me that I was the first. He also said that if I had stayed home another 20 minutes that I would have bled to death," she recalled.

"I do remember that in the ER, people were looking for things, I guess because the set-up was different than where they had been before. But what really sticks out in my mind is how nice everyone was and how well taken care of I was. Everyone was really good and I guess it made me feel more secure that it was a brand-new environment and it was sparkly and clean and new," she said.

Iris went on to add: "I know it was the doctor's skill that saved me, but I firmly believe it was God who directed his hands and that I give all glory to God for keeping me safe and alive."

Iris remained in the hospital for four days following her life-saving surgery. However she was already home and recovering when phase two of the hospital move came on Sunday, September 18. On that day, starting at 7 a.m., forty patients were moved from KDH to Fishersville with the last patient arriving at 11:20.

"We're a stronger organization now," said Richard Bonin, AMC chairman of the board, after the final move. "We want to be the very best hospital of its kind I the whole world...and we have the people to make it happen," he concluded.

For the Holmes family, the hospital opened its doors at just the right time. Although she has never returned as an in-patient, Iris has made some emergency room visits and her husband has had surgery and has spent some time there as have her son and grandchildren.

"The hospital was really needed. I like that it has remained a community hospital. It's a wonderful hospital that is centrally located between the two cities," she said.

The experience of the Holmes' family was repeated time after time in the opening days of the hospital. One patient, Kathryn Knowles of Staunton, had to be moved from KDH during the middle of the week between the two Sunday move days and thus witnessed from her hospital room window the second move on September 18. She was moved enough by the experience to pen a letter to the editor of the local newspaper about what she saw.

"...It was my privilege to observe from my window in the new hospital as the parade of rescue squad vehicles, staff cars and moving vans arrived from King's Daughters'. There was excitement in the air and pleased anticipation by nursing and medical personnel as patients settled into their

beautiful new rooms at AMC. The prevailing atmosphere was one of muted joy and pride that these two communities had finally accomplished what had seemed insurmountable only a few years ago," she wrote.

"Our new AMC had brought the true heart and soul of both Waynesboro Community Hospital and KDH to its new mission, and we have all grown more tolerant, more open to change and more invested in the future of our community through cooperating on making AMC a reality. It is a good place."

# General Sheridan's Explanation for 'The Burning' of the Valley

By Daniel A. Métraux

*Editor's Note: Bulletin Associate Editor Daniel A. Métraux offers another perspective on Union General Philip Sheridan and his infamous campaign of destruction in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864, a military action that came to be known simply as "The Burning."*

During my childhood in the Greenwich Village section of New York City in the 1950s and early 1960s, I passed the resolute statue of General Philip H. Sheridan every day walking to and from school. The statue, erected in 1908, stands in the middle of a charming small park, Sheridan Square. A small sign by the figure of Sheridan identifies him as one of the great generals in American history whose courage and intelligent leadership played a key role in saving the Union.

Sheridan (1831-1888) is one of the most highly decorated officers in American military history. He especially stands out for his exploits in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864. He is known for his famous ride during the Battle of Cedar Creek (19 October 1864) when he led a charge that transformed a rout of the Union army into a successful drive that led the way to the subjugation of the Valley by his forces by early 1865. Historians typically group Sheridan among the topmost three Union generals in the Civil War alongside Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman.

When I moved to Staunton in 1983, however, I heard a very different story about Sheridan. I read that he had implemented a hard war that local histories termed "The Burning." Following Union victories at Cedar Creek and later at Third Winchester and Fisher's Hill, Federal forces had abruptly ended the Confederate's former dominance of the lush and productive valley that had served as the "Breadbasket of the Confederacy." The time had come for the Union to stab the very heart of the Confederacy.

As Confederate General Jubal Early and his army retreated south towards Staunton, General Grant realized there was now a golden opportunity to end the Confederate ability to wage war in the Valley. Grant ordered Sheridan to bring the war directly to the residents of the Valley in the autumn of 1864. Mills, barns, homes, crops, supplies and anything





*Statue of General Philip Sheridan  
seen in Sheridan Square in New York  
City. (Photo by Daniel Métraux)*

else considered a possible aid to the Confederate effort were ruthlessly and systematically torched by Union cavalry. This campaign infuriated the entire Confederacy and remains almost as controversial today as did Sherman's triumphal march across Georgia in late 1864.

Late in life Sheridan wrote and published his memoirs giving a very detailed and clear rendition of his military career.<sup>1</sup> He includes a detailed explanation of why he brought about the "Burning" of the Valley—a clear example of the concept of "Total War":<sup>2</sup>

During his visit to General Hunter<sup>3</sup> at the Monocacy<sup>4</sup>, General Grant had not only decided to retain in the Shenandoah Valley a large force sufficient to defeat Early's army or drive it back to Lee, but he had furthermore determined to make that section, by the destruction of its supplies, untenable for continued occupancy by the Confederates. This would cut off one of Lee's main-stays in the way of subsistence, and at the same time diminish the number of recruits and conscripts he received; the valley district while under his control not only supplying Lee with an abundance of food, but also furnishing him many men for his regular and irregular forces. Grant's instructions to destroy the valley began with the letter of August 5 to Hunter, which was turned over to me, and this was followed at intervals by more specific directions, all showing the earnestness of his purpose. He had rightly concluded that it was time to bring the war home to a people engaged in raising crops from a prolific soil to feed the country's enemies, and devoting to the Confederacy its best youth. I endorsed the programme in all its parts. For the stores of meat and grain that the valley provided,

and the men it furnished for Lee's depleted regiments, were the strongest auxiliaries he possessed in the whole insurgent section.

In a war a territory like this is a factor of great importance, and whichever adversary controls it permanently reaps all the advantages of its prosperity. Hence, as I have said, I endorsed Grant's programme for I do not hold war to mean simply that lines of men shall engage each other in battle, and material interests be ignored. This is but a duel, in which one combatant seeks the other's life; war means much more and is far worse than this. Those who rest at home in peace and plenty see but little of the horrors attending such a duel, and even grow indifferent to them as the struggle goes on, contenting themselves with encouraging all who are able-bodied to enlist in the cause, to fill up the shattered ranks as death thins them.

It is another matter, however, when deprivation and suffering are brought to their own doors. Then the case appears much graver, for the loss of property weighs heavy with the most of mankind; heavier often, than the sacrifices made on the field of battle. Death is popularly considered the maximum punishment in war, but it is not; reduction to poverty brings prayers for peace more surely and more quickly than does the destruction of human life; as the selfishness of man has demonstrated in more than one great conflict.

Sheridan's "Burning" and Sherman's march across Georgia represent one of the first instances of total war implemented by the U. S. Army. Sherman and Sheridan both argued that the best way to arrive at peace is to annihilate the enemy as quickly as possible. This policy came in full force with the American atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, but it got its start in the Valley of Virginia and the heart of Georgia.

Sheridan's "Burning" and his defeat of General Early's Confederate Army played a key role in helping to insure President Lincoln's reelection in November 1864. As late as the summer of 1864 Lincoln was sure that he was not headed for a second term because of the inability of the Union armies to win a war that seemed to drag on forever. However, Sherman's capture of Atlanta in September 1864 and Sheridan's victories and "Burning" decisively turned the tide of war and assured Lincoln's landslide victory. If Sherman and Sheridan had not succeeded in their endeavors in the early autumn of 1864 and if Lincoln had lost the election, the Lincoln administration or its successor might well have been forced to sue for peace and recognize the independence of the Confederacy.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>See Philip H. Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2006). Originally published in 1888.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 251-252.

<sup>3</sup>General David Hunter (1802-1886) was a Union officer closely involved in several military campaigns in the Shenandoah during the Civil War.

<sup>4</sup>Site of a July 1864 Civil War battle near Frederick, Maryland.

# O.W. Gilbert and his Bus Service

By Robert E. Alley

*Editor's Note: The following information was compiled by ACHS member Robert E. Alley in an interview with O. W. Gilbert Jr., son of O. W. Gilbert Sr., on Monday 31-October-2016 at his home. It was later reviewed by O.W. with minor additions.)*

Orin Wesley Gilbert, Sr. initiated the bus service in 1932 in the Great Depression, purchasing his bus from Hansford Homan, who lived north of Laurel Hill near Landrum's. Mr. Homan was already hauling women to work at the coat factory (Staunton Manufacturing Company, later Genesco) in Staunton. O.W. continued that service. In the early morning, women from the Laurel Hill area would come to his house near Lewis Creek, and he would transport them to Staunton making stops in Verona and other places along the way. The coat factory was really two factories on Augusta Street in Staunton. The original bus had low headroom and hauled fewer persons than later buses.

Soon afterwards, A. C. Gilkerson, county school superintendent, approached O.W. and asked if he would be willing to haul children to New Hope School. O.W. said yes. So after taking women to the coat factory in the morning, he would travel New Hope Road and begin at Christian's Creek to pick up children to take to New Hope. He traveled through Barren Ridge.

Three years later in 1935, O.W. purchased a new twenty-five-passenger bus from the Hackaney Body Co. in North Carolina and began hauling persons to work at DuPont in Waynesboro, only daylight shift at first. Soon, he made three trips daily except on weekends. Clyde Garber drove for him during the week but had off Saturday and Sunday. Soon, he added a second bus and began hauling for all three shifts. Guy Patterson was one of the drivers.

Then, O.W. was asked to haul children to basketball games; then trips; then more school loads. He added buses as the business expanded. With trips, he had an agreement with Mr. Jessup from Virginia Stage



*O.W. Gilbert buses are lined up in this photo. Gilbert is the second man from the right.*

Lines, who had the route along U.S. 250. The agreement allowed O.W. to haul over Jessup's routes. He had a special sign to use on the side of the bus with not only O.W.'s name but Mr. Jessup's and Virginia Stage Lines. This arrangement satisfied the interstate commerce regulations.

During World War II, O.W. hauled prisoners of war. He would receive a phone call and be asked to report to the train depot in Staunton but not to tell anyone where he was going. Prisoners were taken various places but often to Ingleside Hotel. He was also called to haul prisoners back to the depot.

On Sundays, he operated two buses in Staunton for churchgoers. One route ran Churchville Avenue. (Rt. 250 west) to route 612 and then to Parkersburg Pike (Rt. 254); he would return into Staunton and park on Frederick Street for people to disembark and walk to church. Central Methodist, Trinity Episcopal, Christ Lutheran, Second Presbyterian, First Presbyterian, First Baptist, and Emmanuel Episcopal churches plus St. Francis Roman Catholic Church were all within a couple blocks. After church services concluded, he would take the people home. The other route came from Augusta Military Academy in Fort Defiance north of Staunton and followed the same pattern of parking on Frederick Street. In the afternoon on Sundays, he would travel the gravel road from his home to Sutton's Store, go south on New Hope Road to the Bailey place and return to Christian's Creek and back to Belmont Methodist Church. After the service was over, he would reverse the route and take people home. In addition to Sunday services, O.W. hauled children and adults to various churches for Vacation Bible School in the summer.

O.W. made an arrangement with G. A. Kyle, who had a Pure Oil

Station on Central Avenue. in Staunton, that he would buy his gas for the buses there if Kyle would handle servicing them. Joe Jordan, who had a shop next to Kyle's, did the minor repairs. Buses were parked in a lot across from Kyle's.

All the buses were international buses. The first bus had a low top; the rest were regular height. Later buses could haul thirty or more people. They were brown and trimmed in black; a couple later ones were blue. On the side was a sign: "Gilbert's Bus Service, O.W. Gilbert" plus his address and telephone number. He would purchase the chassis for the bus and take it to a bus company for them to install the body, maybe in Ohio or Indiana

People came to O.W.'s house to be taken to the coat factory or to DuPont. They purchased a ticket for \$1.25, enough for five round trips; O.W. would punch the ticket. It was enough for one week's travel. He handled his own bookkeeping and paid his drivers and repairmen in cash. George Tullidge from Virginia. Auto Mutual Insurance Company handled the insurance.

O.W.'s son recalled that in 1935, his father took a group of about twenty Presbyterians to a conference in Atlanta, Georgia, with his new bus. They stopped overnight at a Presbyterian College in Charlotte, North Carolina. O.W., Jr., as an eleven-year old accompanied his father. They stayed in a rooming house in Atlanta where they received their breakfast and supper; lunch was taken for a quarter at the Woolworth's Lunch Counter.

In the early years, when traveling some distance and having no rest stops available, the bus would pull off the highway for bathroom breaks; women would go outside to one end of the bus and men to the other end!

During the years of his bus service, O.W. also had the contract for a star mail route from Staunton to Lexington, hauling mail between those two cities. Bill Smith was one of the drivers. Later O.W. became a substitute mail carrier.

In 1946, O.W. sold his fleet of eleven buses and the business to Thomas Quick and Morris Livick who created Quick-Livick Bus Service. They were located on Central Avenue. in Staunton.

In 1927-28, O.W. Gilbert had purchased three plus acres with a house near Pleasant Grove School and Church between Verona and Laurel Hill where he would live for about twenty years. This served as home base for his bus business.

In the 1940's, O.W. purchased the Webster Weller Farm near his own home. George Roadcap, who worked for Weller's and lived in the T-shaped house on the left where the road turns to Barren Ridge, also worked for





*Photos of O.W. Gilbert, circa 1966.  
(Courtesy of the Gilbert family)*

O.W. Since the farm was near his home, O.W. never moved into the Weller house. Some of the Roadcap family lived there. After a few years, he sold the farm to W. T. Batten.

During the latter part of the 1930's, O.W. assisted his half-brother operating his restaurant on North Augusta Street in Staunton where Rask Florist later located. He also worked briefly at Basic-Witz Furniture Factory.

After leaving the bus service, O.W. owned and operated a grocery store on the Richmond Road (Route 250) east of Staunton across from the National Cemetery. He did this for three to four years and then sold it to Ralph Aldhizer who operated it as Ralph's Superette.

About 1950, O.W. purchased the Homer Garber Farm across from Barren Ridge Church of the Brethren and moved there, only to return to live near his former home at Laurel Hill about 1960. During his farming years, O.W. sold seed corn to farmers for several years.

# A Brief Historical Overview of the North River Area, Augusta County, Va., 1735-1950

By Charles W. Blair

*Editor's Note: Over the years, the Bulletin has featured a number of Charles "Bill" Blair's local history articles. The retired James Madison University professor is a wealth of knowledge, especially if the topic involves the communities in north-western Augusta County or Presbyterian church history. This essay, which Blair produced for his North River Ruritan Club, provides readers with a clear window into the heritage of his local community. (Printed 2013 This material may not be reproduced without the permission of the writer.)*

The North River Ruritan Club was organized in 1938 and since that time has sought to serve the surrounding community. This program of community service has included many activities and projects which have attempted to build a stronger sense of community in the rural area which it seeks to serve.

In the twentieth-first century the area is marked by beautiful scenery, well-kept homes, and a diverse agricultural economy. While residents of the area enjoy the conveniences of modern life, they are also able to experience a lifestyle that contains many valuable rural traditions. Yet, rapid social, economic, and technological changes threaten to undermine the valuable sense of community that has marked the area. Those men who founded the club in 1938 would undoubtedly be amazed to witness the changes which have occurred since their efforts to establish the organization seventy-five years ago.

The club believes that one way to maintain a sense of community in times of rapid changes is to promote a better understanding of the history of the community. Toward that end, this brief historical overview of the North River community is presented. Hopefully, it will be of interest and value to residents of the community and to visitors who come to the area.

Each of the following sections presents a general overview of the history of the area and then seeks to identify specific sites and events which relate to that history. The North River area for the purposes of this presentation is considered to be that part of North River District from which the membership of the North River Ruritan Club has been drawn. It is not a



*Looking to the west from Mossy Creek toward Mt. Solon and Stokesville.*

complete history and not all significant sites and events could be included. However, it is hoped that it will in some small way stimulate both interest in and appreciation for the community and that it will encourage further study and research.

### **Early Settlement: 1730-1775**

The first European settlers arrived in America in 1607 when a settlement was established at Jamestown in eastern Virginia. After hardships, the settlement grew and the Crown Colony of Virginia was established. Over the next century the colony developed a plantation economy based on tobacco and slave labor. The predominantly English colonists by 1700s had moved westward toward the Blue Ridge, but the Shenandoah Valley was not settled. The British were concerned about the French and their Indian allies to the north and west. Therefore, they decided that the settlement of the Valley would provide a buffer between them and the French and Indians. At this time no Native Americans lived in the Valley, but Indian tribes did live to the west and to the south. Occasionally, Indian war parties and hunting parties did travel through the Valley.

Meanwhile, many immigrants of Scottish background from the north of Ireland who became known as the Scotch-Irish, and Germans, from along the Rhine River, came to Pennsylvania. There they competed for land

and prices increased. At this time, agents for the Colony of Virginia were encouraging settlers to come to the Valley where land was cheaper. Soon, settlers started coming south along the Warrior Path, an Indian trail, which led from eastern Pennsylvania, across the Potomac River and down the Shenandoah Valley. The first recorded settlement in the Valley was made by a group of Germans on Hawksbill Creek near Luray in 1727 and by the early 1730s settlements were made on Opequon Creek near Winchester and at Beverley's Mill Place near Staunton.

European settlers did not arrive in the North River area until the late 1730s. When settlers did arrive they were mostly Scotch-Irish, Germans, English, and some Dutch were included. Land was acquired by head right, purchased from the colonial authorities or from a land speculator. Each settler who sought a head right was awarded fifty acres of land for himself and for each person brought with him. Thus, a family of five could secure 250 acres and were required to have a few acres cleared for cultivation within three years. Additional land could also be purchased from the Crown or from a land speculator. Land speculators were people who purchased tracts of land and then resold it to incoming settlers. William Beverley from eastern Virginia was one of these speculators and his tract, known as Beverley Manor, was located around Staunton, but did not include the North River area. However, there was one land speculator in the North River area by the name of Green who probably sold land near Stribling Springs and Buck Hill. The task of identifying all early settlers in the North River area would be large endeavor and has not been undertaken. Most early land grants are identified by the watershed upon which they were



*Replica of an early log cabin  
at the Ulster American Folk  
Park in Northern Ireland.*

located. A review of land records and other sources has identified some of these early settlers. Families with the surnames of Ralston, McPheeters, and Davis were in the Mt. Solon area. Smiths were settled at Sangerville, and Hogsheads and McKameys were living near Stribling Springs. Bell, Irvine, Coyner, and Blair families lived on the Long Glade, John and James McCoy lived on Mossy Creek, and a group of German families resided in Wise Hollow. Over time other families joined them as the population grew. In response to the population growth in the Valley two new counties, Frederick and Augusta, were created west of the Blue Ridge in 1738. The northern boundary of Augusta was near New Market and the southern boundary was toward the North Carolina line. Thus, the present counties of Rockingham, Rockbridge, Bath, Highland, Pendleton, and others were areas included in what is now Augusta County. The Mississippi River was said to be the western boundary although France claimed some of that territory. All counties in the Colony of Virginia had a county court and a vestry.

The Augusta County Court began to function in 1745 and was composed of justices from throughout the county. Prior to that date some land records for the North River area were recorded through the Orange County Court east of the Blue Ridge. The vestry governed the Augusta Parish of the Anglican Church and was responsible for overseeing public morals and caring for the poor. The parish church for Augusta County was what became Trinity Episcopal Church located in Staunton. All men over the age of sixteen were required to serve in the colonial militia and were organized into companies. The militia was called upon to defend residents from Indian attack when the need arose. Also, men were ordered by the county court to help maintain roads. Roads were at best bridal paths that needed to be marked and kept free of fallen trees and other obstructions. The parish vestry also required men to help with the processing of land. Periodically, the property boundaries would be marked to avoid land disputes. The Anglican Church was the official church of Colony of Virginia and all residents, regardless of religious affiliation, were required to pay a tithe to the established church.

Most of the early settlers were actually not members of the Anglican Church and were considered to be dissenters. Dissenters in the Colony of Virginia were not permitted to establish churches, but the colony permitted Valley dissenters to establish "meeting houses" with the permission of the county court. This was done to encourage settlement of the area.





*Augusta Stone  
Presbyterian Church.*



*Mossy Creek Presbyterian  
Church. The first building  
was a half mile upstream*

While law required that all marriages be performed by Anglican clergy, it appears that this law was not rigorously enforced.

Probably not all settlers on the frontier were religious people, but those who were worshipped at first in homes, or in the open when the weather permitted. The first meeting house to serve settlers in the North River area was Augusta Meeting House where the Reverend John Craig became pastor in 1741. These Presbyterian services started in the morning and lasted until dark. A two-hour sermon was preached in the morning and after a midday meal another was given in the afternoon, which sometimes ended by candlelight. By 1768 Presbyterian settlers in the North River area tired of the difficult journey to the Augusta Meeting House and organized Mossy Creek Meeting House. This was the first organized congregation known to have existed in the North River community. A pastor, the Reverend Thomas

Jackson, served other congregations, including the Cooks Creek Meeting House that was located at Dayton at a site now under the waters of Silver Lake. The first meeting house for the Mossy Creek congregation stood about a half-mile southwest of the present church in a meadow beside Mossy Creek on what is now the Reeves farm. Four subsequent church buildings, erected after the American Revolution, were located near the site of the present church. Union Presbyterian Church was established in 1817 and shared a pastor with Mossy Creek for a decade or so.

Settlers of other denominations probably worshiped in homes. Sometimes an itinerant minister would visit and sermons would be preached and Communion celebrated. This pattern was especially true for German settlers who were Lutheran, German Reformed, and German Baptist (Church of the Brethren). Because German was still the language used in worship services, these settlers needed ministers who could speak German.

By the 1750s the frontier had moved west from the North River area and was located in what is now Pendleton, Highland, and Bath counties. Relations between the British and French worsened. Indian allies of the French attacked the frontier at a number of points, and panic spread through the Valley. Indian incursions also occurred in the Valley and many settlers considered moving to eastern Virginia or to Pennsylvania.

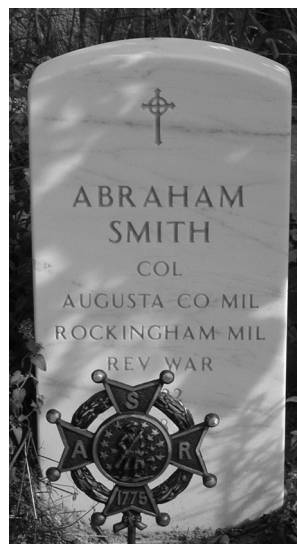
There is no record of Indian attacks in the North River community, but many men from the area would have gone with militia units to combat the French and Indians. One of these was John Smith who was a captain in the militia and lived on his plantation named "Egypt" near Sangerville. He led, in 1756, a company of militiamen to Fort Vause near Christiansburg. They held the fort for three days against a large group of French and Indians, but finally had to surrender after his son, John, was killed and a second son, Joseph, was wounded. The French had agreed to release the captured Smiths, but after seeing how small the force was they refused to release Smith and carried him and his wounded son as prisoners to the French territories. Meanwhile, his creditors, upon hearing of his capture, demanded that his estate be probated so that his debts could be settled. His eldest son, Abraham, refused to serve as executor because he believed that his father would return. His father had sewn the agreement with the French into the lining of his coat and was able to gain his release when he presented it to French leaders. He returned to his home at Sangerville after two years of captivity.

Abraham Smith led militiamen to the South Branch Valley after the

burning of Fort Seybert near the present site of Brandywine, West Virginia. After fighting the Indians there, he returned home, and was falsely accused of cowardice. A court-martial cleared him of the charges and his accuser was fined. He was active in the affairs of Augusta County and in Rockingham County after its organization in 1778. The annual Treasure Mountain Festival at Franklin commemorates the burning of Fort Seybert in the South Branch Valley.

Another story related to this period in the North River area involved Elizabeth Irvine who lived on the Glade between Mossy Creek and Bridgewater. An old Indian woman, known as Shawnee Kate, came to her house while the men of the family were on a hunting expedition. After receiving food she informed Mrs. Irvine that Killbuck, a Shawnee chief, planned to attack the settlement at Deerfield. Since Mrs. Irvine had lived near Deerfield before her marriage, she was very disturbed by the news. She then mounted a horse and rode during the night up the Glade to Buffalo Gap, and then to Deerfield, where she gave warning to the settlement. By 1764 the hostilities with the Indians in the Valley were over as the frontier moved westward.

The agriculture of the Valley differed from the eastern part of the colony. Instead of dependence on tobacco, a diversity of crops was grown. Maize, or Indian corn, was planted as were wheat and rye. Hemp, which was used in the manufacture of rope and cloth, was an important crop during colonial times. Flax was grown and made into linen. One visitor noted that he attended a "scotching frolick" east of Centerville near Grat-tan's Hill where flax was being dressed. Hogs and cattle were allowed to roam woodlands. Efforts to clear crop land were slow and labor intensive and the amount of cleared land must have grown slowly. The land that settlers believed to be most valuable was chosen first. Of course, the grants chosen by early settlers reflected their understanding of what constituted good land. It is sometimes said that Germans had a better eye for good land than did the Scotch-Irish. Land that was not granted to individuals still belonged to the British Crown.



*Grave marker for Abraham Smith near Sangerville.*



*A hewn log house such as this replaced earlier crude log cabins*

At first settlers struggled to produce enough food to feed their families and livestock. As conditions improved, surplus grain and other products were sold to ordinaries, or inns, located on the Warrior Path that soon became known as the Great Wagon Road. A stream of immigrants continued down the Wagon Road to settle in the Valley, Southwestern Virginia, the Carolinas, and later in Kentucky. Some who lived in the area chose to join them in the pursuit of more and cheaper land. As production increased, crops were sent by pack horse and wagon down the Wagon Road to places like Philadelphia and Alexandria. Others chose to trade east over the Blue Ridge at Richmond and Fredericksburg. Some Valley farmers distilled grain into liquor so that it could be transported easier.

Grist mills were needed to produce flour and meal. Soon grist mills were located on Mossy Creek because of its dependable flow of spring water. One such mill was established in the early 1770s by the German, Henry Miller. Miller and a business partner, Mark Bird, established not only a grist mill, but also an iron furnace. More information about this enterprise will be presented later. A young Presbyterian minister who visited the Mossy Creek Meeting House in 1775 wrote in his journal that

Mr. Hunter gave a sermon at Mossy Creek near the furnace. This Neighborhood is covered with Pine, finely watered by branches of the Shenadore; and the land I am told, and by Appearance, is fertile. Every part of this broad Valley is setteable and filled with inhabitants.

By 1775 many residents of the North River area had been in the Valley for several decades. A new generation that had no memories of European homelands and knew nothing but life in the Valley had come of age. A sense of independence and dissatisfaction with British rule led them to

seek independence from Great Britain. Botetourt County was organized in 1775 and its leaders instructed their representatives to proclaim:

Gentlemen, my gun, my tomahawk, my life, I desire to tender to the honor of my King and country; but my liberty to roam these woods upon the same terms my father has done, is not mine to give up. It was not purchased by me, and purchased it was. It is entailed upon my son and the tenure is sacred. Watch over it gentlemen, for to him it must descend inviolate, if my arm can defend it; but if not, if wicked power is permitted to prevail against me, the original purchase was blood, and mine shall seal the surrender.

These sentiments probably reflected the feeling of many who lived in the Valley and the North River area.

### **The American Revolution and the New Republic: 1776-1860**

Americans did declare their independence from Great Britain in 1776 and the American Revolution followed. Such action was filled with danger because it was considered treason. Nevertheless, men in the militia were called upon to muster to fight the British. A tradition exists that Scotch-Irish settlers built a large bonfire atop Independence Hill (Gratton Hill) east of the present village of Centerville to celebrate the Declaration of Independence. This bonfire could have been on what is now called Wise Hill.

*The John Bell house on the Glade recently owned by the Angleberger family.*







*Henry Miller's Mill with two water wheels.*

Undoubtedly many men from the North River area served in the War for independence, but a complete list does not exist. Several, however, are known. John Bell, from the Glade, served in the militia under General Peter Muhlenberg, a German and a Lutheran minister from the Valley. Bell survived the war and resided on the Glade during the early 1800s and lived in a stone house that still stands. Another man known to have served was Joseph Woodell who probably lived near Narrow Back Mountain and later lived in Pocahontas County in what is now West Virginia. Others supported the war by providing material support and wagons for transportation.

Much change occurred during the Revolution and after its conclusion. The former Colony of Virginia became the Commonwealth of Virginia and many new counties were created during the war. Rockingham County was created from Augusta in 1778. Later, other counties were created to the west. After the Revolution there was no state church and all denominations were equal before the law. The government of the new Commonwealth was dominated by the large land owners of the eastern part of the state and residents of the Shenandoah Valley and the area beyond the Alleghenies felt that their interests were neglected.

As mentioned earlier, Henry Miller developed an iron furnace and forge on Mossy Creek, and after the Revolution it became an important industrial site. Pig iron was sold throughout the state and iron goods including stove plates were manufactured. Ore was mined from nearby hillsides and smelted at the furnace. One of the mines was on the Arey farm

where the mining pit can still be seen. Large quantities of charcoal were needed in the smelting process and timber was cut and made into charcoal. McCutchen Foley related that there was an area of dark soil in one of his fields, which was said to have been a location for making charcoal. Miller purchased large tracts of land to secure the wood to support the furnace.

Henry Miller also operated a large grist mill in addition to the furnace and forge. These were powered by water from Mossy Creek. He constructed a dam on the stream, which provided water power to these enterprises. This dam stood near the bridge that now crosses Mossy Creek near State Route 42. The lake created by the dam extended over a mile upstream. In the early 1800s, James Miller, son of Henry, operated a paper mill upstream near Mossy Creek Church which manufactured fine paper that was sold throughout the state. Slave labor was used at the iron furnace and when Henry Miller died, the inventory of his estate listed forty-four slaves. After Miller's death the property was owned by his son, Samuel, who sold it to John Kneagy who in turn placed it in the hands of his son Henry. By the 1840s it was owned by Daniel Forrer who had married Henry Kneagy's daughter.

Other mills were located on the banks of Mossy Creek. Early in the 1800s, there was a mill just below the Blue Hole near Mt. Solon. The mill was first operated by Edward Erwin Jr. and later was owned by Abraham Branaman. A fulling mill and a hemp mill also were located nearby. Another grist mill was located in Mt. Solon at the bottom of the present mill pond. It was owned by Moorman and Cupp in the 1850s.

One of the problems confronting both the Commonwealth of Virginia and the North River area was the absence of good roads. To meet this need the General Assembly chartered private turnpikes, especially during the 1830s. The largest of these was the Valley Turnpike that ran from Winchester south to Staunton. It was built with some support from Baltimore and other northern ports that wanted business from the Valley. Richmond and other eastern ports also sought Valley business and an earlier turnpike existed from Staunton to Scottsville on the James River Canal. There, goods were loaded on canal boats and taken to Richmond. This enterprise changed when the railroad from Richmond came to Staunton in the 1850s. The Harrisonburg to Warm Springs Turnpike was constructed during the 1830s and followed the course of State Route 42 to Parnassus where it turned west past Augusta Springs (Stribling Springs) and continued on to Warm Springs. Another turnpike, the Staunton to Iron Works Turnpike,



*Loading canal boats at Scottsville.*

was approved in 1837, but there is no known record of its construction. However, there is a tradition that it followed State Route 613 and deeds for farms on the Glade in the 1920s refer to the turnpike.

Another concern for the residents of the North River area between 1776 and 1860 was the education of their children. Many learned to read and write at home and often parents would unite to build a schoolhouse and hire a teacher, but there was no state system of public education. Evidence of these private primary schools can be found in county records.

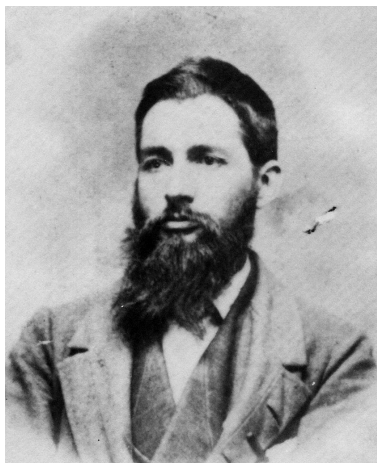
One was located near Centerville and another was located near Mossy Creek. Education beyond the primary level was sometimes provided by classical schools for those who could afford the tuition. The Reverend John Hendren, who lived near the Mohler farm on Scenic Highway and was pastor at Mossy Creek, conducted a classical school and records also mention



*The Daniel Forrer home built by Henry Miller ca. 1784.*

the Glade Classical School. These classical schools taught Latin, Greek, mathematics and other subjects.

In 1848 a nineteen-year-old school teacher from New York, Jed Hotchkiss, was touring the Valley with a friend and met Daniel Forrer who owned iron furnaces at Mossy Creek and Luray. Hotchkiss had taught for a year in Pennsylvania and was interested in geography. He and Forrer reached an agreement that he would come to Mossy Creek to teach Forrer's children.



*A young Jed Hotchkiss.*

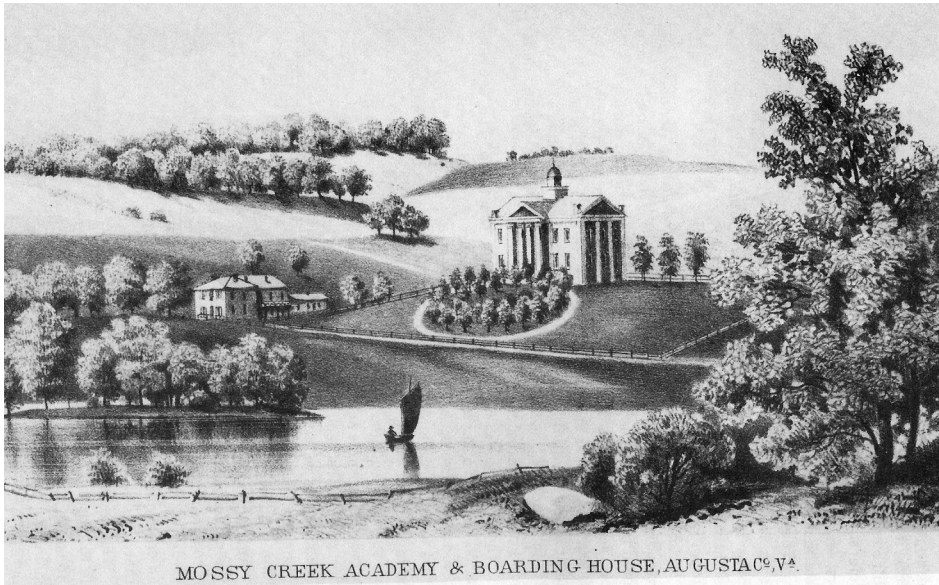
In November of 1847 Hotchkiss traveled south to Virginia. After arriving in Winchester by rail he boarded a stagecoach, traveled all night down the Valley Turnpike, and arrived in Harrisonburg the next morning. After breakfast he secured a horse and rode to Mossy Creek. He later recorded in his journal what he saw as he topped the hill coming from Bridgewater.

*This place is to be my home during the winter and it is quite a pleasant place and looks like a small "ville" only some of the building look more like workshops than dwellings.*

The following Monday morning Hotchkiss started teaching in spite of twelve inches of snow. His school grew and by 1852 he developed the idea of building an academy to serve more students. An Academy Association was formed and after several delays the new Mossy Creek Academy was completed. The Board of Trustees for the Academy included Daniel Forrer, John Craun, Sr., Andrew B. Rodgers, John Givens Fulton, John Marshall McCue, George R. Gibbons, and Benjamin Estill. The Building Committee for the new academy included Thomas Reeves and James Davies, plus Forrer, Craun, Rodgers, and Fulton.

Hotchkiss returned to his home in New York during the summer and married. The couple returned to Mossy Creek and had two children. He was highly respected in his church and community. However, by 1858 he was having financial difficulties and he sold his interest in the academy. Sarah, his wife, was experiencing poor health and the couple moved to Stribling Springs so that she could "take the waters." After a year he moved to Churchville, bought a farm, and opened Loch Willow Academy.





*The Mossy Creek Academy. The house below the academy was the Hotchkiss home and student boarding house.*

Although he was from New York, he cast his lot with the Confederacy when the Civil War began. He offered his services as a civilian engineer and soon displayed leadership abilities. Hotchkiss became a map maker for General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and served throughout the conflict, even though he was never given a commission. After the war he was actively involved in resource development in Virginia and West Virginia. He was one of a group that sought to develop in the 1870s Shendon, new town on the railroad in eastern Rockingham County. Today that town is known as Grottoes. His last years were spent in Staunton at his home, The Oakes.

While Mossy Creek Presbyterian Church was the first known congregation to be organized in the North River area before the Revolution, the organization of other churches soon followed after independence was achieved. Weiss Meeting House or St. Michaels German Reformed Church was organized in 1789. It served the Germans living in and around Wise Hollow. Lutherans worshipped there also until about 1802.

Germans also organized Emmanuel Church west of Mt. Solon about 1801. Lutherans, German Reform, and German Baptist probably worshipped there. There was a division in that church in the 1830s and the Lutheran members organized St. Paul Lutheran on North River in 1834 and a church was erected in 1844. It is probable that some of the Reformed members affiliated with Mossy Creek Church. Emmanuel then became a German Baptist (Church of the Brethren) congregation.





*Emmanuel Church. This congregation recently completed a new church*

The Methodist Episcopal Church was established in America in the 1790s and grew rapidly. The first Methodist Church known to be organized in the North River area was at Mt. Solon in the 1830s. The deed for the church property suggests that the church was located near the present cemetery in Mt. Solon. The names of its trustees indicate that its membership was drawn from families of both Scotch-Irish and German backgrounds. Later Methodist Churches were established at Parnassus, Sangerville and Centerville. The Mt. Solon Methodist Church closed late in the twentieth century as did the Methodist church at Centerville. By the Civil War the Methodist Church was probably the largest denomination in the Valley.

The United Brethren Church was organized about 1800 and might be described as a German Methodist Church. Mt. Zion Church, west of Mt. Solon, was organized about 1834 and was a member church in this denomination. Later in the nineteenth-century the denomination split and one part became the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the other part remained United Brethren Church. It is assumed that Mt. Olivet remained with the United Brethren and Mt. Zion was affiliated with the Evangelical United Brethren. In 1968 the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged with the Methodist Church and now Mt. Zion is a United Methodist church.

Undoubtedly there were German Baptist (Church of the Brethren) in the North River area early. These probably met in homes or barns. The Flat Rock Church



*Parnassus Methodist Church*



*Mt. Zion Church*



*Mt. Olivet Church*

near Timberville was established in the 1790s and Beaver Creek Church in Rockingham County was organized later. The Beaver Creek congregation sought to serve German Baptists in Augusta County and helped to build in 1854 the Pudding Spring Meeting House. The name was taken from the spring located over the hill on the former William R. Blair farm. Later, when the nearby village was named Moscow, the church became known as the Moscow Church of the Brethren. Elk Run Church of the Brethren was built in 1881 as was Summit Church to serve the growing number of Brethren in the area.

Language is very important to ethnic identity and many German churches sought to retain German as the language used in worship services. However, younger members pressed for the use of English and this was an issue for some churches in the 1830s and 1840s. Also, there was intermarriage between families of different ethnic backgrounds. This trend was illustrated at Mossy Creek Church where more German names gradually appeared among the Scotch-Irish names on the membership rolls. The first elder with a German surname, John Karicofe, was elected in 1859.

Throughout the history of early America there was always a frontier to which an individual might go to make a new start in life, to acquire cheaper land, or to take advantage of new opportunities. During the Colonial



*Moscow Church of the Brethren*



*Elk Run Church*

period residents of the North River area moved to Southwest Virginia, across the Alleghenies, to the Carolinas. Later, movement continued to Kentucky, Ohio, Texas, California, and many other locations. This westward migration is illustrated by the family of Joseph Bywaters who lived on the Glade in the 1840s. While unloading a threshing box, he was injured and died. His widow was left with a number of children and she decided to move her family to Texas where they prospered. In the 1990s a descendant came to the area and discovered a crude stone on the Marvin and Ruby Switzer farm, which marked the grave of Joseph. The magnitude of this westward



*The grave of Joseph Bywaters*

migration is evidenced each year by the number of visitors and inquires from the west that come to the North River area seeking information about ancestors from local records and cemeteries.

The standard of living improved for many during the first half of the nineteenth century. Manufactured goods were available in stores for those who could afford such purchases. The Staunton newspapers advertised various dry goods and dyes for making clothing. Even a “dentist” published a notice that he would be in Staunton for two weeks and welcomed patients. Those with few resources still relied on homespun clothes, shoes from a local cobbler, and more primitive forms of tooth extraction.

The germ theory of disease was unknown and the newspapers advertised various remedies, which would cure numerous ailments. The most affluent traveled to various mineral springs to “take the waters.” Stribling Springs, sometime known as Augusta Springs, in the North River area was one of these resorts. The resort was owned after 1817 by Erasmus Stribling, mayor of Staunton, and provided fine food and lodging to its guests who often came great distances for its benefits. The alum, sulfur, and chalybeate springs were valued for health reasons. There were several country medical doctors in the community and a vaccination for smallpox could be secured for a dollar. A letter from a resident near Mt. Solon gives some insight into the nature of medical treatment in the 1850s in this rural area. A relative of the family was suffering from an abscess on one of her breasts. A year of treatment failed to bring about a cure and then a tumor was discovered. Several doctors from the North River area were consulted and the decision was made to perform surgery in the kitchen of her home. The patient was put to sleep with either chloroform or ether, and the surgery lasted for several hours. The writer stated that the operation was successful, the tumor was removed, and that the patient did not awaken until stitches were being put in place.

While many crops were grown, wheat was the cash crop in the North River area and throughout the Valley and Southern Pennsylvania. The 1860 U.S. Census indicated that about one half of the land in Augusta County was improved so there was less crop land than would be true in modern times. This census indicates also that there were about 28,000 people in what is now Augusta County. Population data for the North River area is not available, but the countryside was more sparsely populated than is the case today.

Three men from the North River community represented Augusta





*Home of John Marshall McCue, a member of the House of Delegates and a slave owner.*

County in the House of Delegates before the Civil War. John Estill, the son-in-law of Henry Miller, served two terms in the 1820s. John Givens Fulton served one term in the 1840s and John Marshall McCue was first elected in 1848 and continued to serve until the end of the Civil War.

Slavery was a major issue during this period and would eventually lead to the Civil War. Slaves were found in many colonies, but after the American Revolution many Northern States prohibited the practice. Slavery was a major component of the eastern Virginia plantation system and in many counties slaves greatly outnumbered the white population. Virginia law clearly defined slaves as property and the master had almost absolute control over them. When a slave was received into the membership of Mossy Creek Church, the records stated that "Titus, a man of colour and the property of Mr. Turk, was received on profession of faith."

Virginia feared greatly the possibility of a slave uprising and enacted laws to control both slaves and free blacks. A Negro who was freed had to register with the county clerk and was supposed to leave the state within a year. Over time the laws regulating blacks became more restric-



tive. Blacks could not be taught to read, and law prohibited gatherings of Negroes, unless led by a white man.

There were slaves in Augusta county and the throughout the period they constituted about twenty percent of the population. Many small farmers could not afford the cost of purchasing and maintaining slaves. Others, with larger farms, sometimes owned three or four. The largest owners were individuals with large farms or commercial interests such as Henry Miller. The pattern of slave ownership in the North River area was probably typical of Augusta County. The Presbyterian Church did not take a position on the slavery question until the eve of the Civil War when the denomination split over the issue and many Presbyterians were slave owners. The United Brethren and the German Baptist denominations opposed slavery. Methodists originally were opposed to slavery, but later the denomination split into northern and southern branches over the question.

Gradually, the divide between North and South intensified and was very complex. Both sections of the country believed their way of life was superior and sectionalism sometimes overrode beliefs about slavery. In some respects the Shenandoah Valley that included the North River community was a unique area. It differed from the Deep South and eastern Virginia, but it was a part of Virginia. After the election of Abraham Lincoln as President in 1860 many in the area still wanted to remain in the Union and urged a moderate course of action. However, when Lincoln called for troops to put down the rebellion in South Carolina, Virginia and the North River area left the Union and became a part of a new nation, the Confederate States of America on April 17, 1861. Only ten votes in Augusta County were cast against the Ordinance of Secession.

### **Civil War and Recovery: 1861-1900**

The Civil War was a watershed event in American history and the four years of that war remain the focus of much interest in modern times. Both sides were euphoric about the prospect for a quick victory and neither side foresaw the death and destruction that would unfold. State militia units were called to duty and many from the area were sent off to war with spirited parades and celebrations. Large numbers of men from the North River area were members of the 5<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Regiment and the 52<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Infantry Regiment. Companies in the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment were the Mountain Guards from Spring Hill that contained men from the Glade area, and the Ready Rifles from Sangerville. The Letcher Guard from the Mossy Creek area and the Harper Guard from Mt. Solon were units in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Regiment.



*Graves of Civil War soldiers in Mossy Creek cemetery.*

The experiences of two privates give some sense of the experiences of these men. Adam Kersh, a cabinet maker from Wise Hollow, was a member of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Regiment and served, with several interruptions, until the conclusion of the war. Early in the conflict he was stationed in the Alleghenies during the winter of 1862. Since many soldiers had lived in isolated rural areas, they had not acquired immunity to many illnesses, and sickness spread rapidly through the ranks. Kersh served in numerous other battles throughout the war and is buried at St. Michaels Church. James Blair lived at Pudding Springs and entered the war as a member of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment in 1862. He fought in many battles and was at Gettysburg in 1863. He wrote to his mother in 1864 that “a soldier’s life is hard as sure as you are born. I hope that this bloody affair may soon end, but I am willing to serve until our independence is gained. I will be cheerful and put up with it all because I am sure that a better day is coming.” He was killed at Burkettown in September of 1864 only about ten miles from home as the Confederate Army retreated south after the Battle of Fishers Hill.

No major military actions occurred in the North River area, but units of both armies were in the area. In the spring of 1862 Stonewall Jackson initiated his famous Valley Campaign. The first major engagement in the campaign was at McDowell. After defeating the Union forces there, he returned to the Valley by way of Stribling Springs and Mt. Solon. His army camped near Mt. Solon and Jackson and his staff met in the mill in that



*The mill at Mt. Solon where Stonewall Jackson met with his staff in May 1862.*

village and some officers visited the nearby home of John Marshall McCue. Jed Hotchkiss was with Jackson's staff and he wrote in his journal that "as we passed Mossy Creek Church they were burying young Harmon". John Harmon was from the area and was killed at McDowell. After battles in the northern Valley, the campaign ended with the Battles of Cross Keys and Port Republic. Jacob Craun from the area was killed at Port Republic.

The Confederate cause experienced success until the summer of 1863. The fall of Vicksburg and the failure of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg constituted a turning point and gradually the superior resources of the Union Army began to overwhelm the Confederate Army. Since Virginia and the North River area were on the upper edge of the Confederacy, much destruction was experienced. The North River area was not in the region burned by General Sheridan in September of 1864, but there were cases where Union forces burned barns and mills. The total number of men killed in the conflict from the area is unknown, but twenty-seven men affiliated with Mossy Creek Church were killed. Thirteen of these were members of the Bell family. Those who were wounded faced grim prospects. Amputation was commonly done to save lives. Make-shift hospitals were established at various times in the area. The Mossy Creek Academy building is said to have served as a hospital as did the Byerly home on Scenic Highway.

Civilians suffered also. Union patrols were in the area in search of food and supplies. Also, civilians had to contend with efforts by the Confederate government to impress livestock and crops to feed their forces. As the value of Confederate money declined, prices rose. In December of 1864 a ham might bring three hundred dollars in Confederate money.

The Civil War and the period leading up to it would have been difficult times for those who disagreed with the Southern cause or opposed the war and slavery on religious grounds. The majority that did endorse the Southern cause saw those who did not as being unpatriotic. Since the United Brethren and the Church of the Brethren did not support slavery or war, some members of those groups would have found it difficult to relate to neighbors and ongoing events in the community. Many of these also did not vote in public elections.

After General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Confederate Army in April of 1865, Virginia and the North River area came under military rule. A period of reconstruction was instituted by the U.S. Congress for the stated purpose of helping the South recover from the war. Many returning soldiers found their farms with no fences, fields overgrown, and little or no livestock.

John Marshall McCue, who had considerable wealth, found all of his holdings being sold in 1874 to pay creditors. Also, worries existed about how the freed slaves would manage, because many had no resources and no understanding of what to do with their new-found freedom. The Freedmen's Bureau was established to help former slaves and teachers from the North came to establish schools for them. Virginia's General Assembly functioned under the supervision of the military command. During this period Augusta County was divided into townships and the area was in the North River Township. Later, these became magisterial districts.

Congress required states that returned to the Union to adopt a constitution that provided voting rights for black males and the establishment of a system of public education for all citizens. Many Virginians were opposed to both provisions, but finally political leaders were able to get enough support for a constitution that contained the necessary provisions. Virginia was readmitted to the Union in 1870. All males, both black and white, were permitted to vote by secret ballot. Previously voting had been oral and public.

According to a Harrisonburg newspaper, the Mossy Creek Academy building burned in 1865 "as the work of some vile incendiary." Thomas

White operated the school briefly after the war in the former Hotchkiss house and then it disappeared from the records. Augusta County undertook the construction of public schools and in 1878 the county bought the academy lot for use as a public school. A two-room school was built there. By the 1880s public elementary schools were located on the Glade, at Towers, Emmanuel, Maple Grove, Mt. Solon, and Moscow. A school for black children was built near Stribling Springs.

The plight of farmers after the Civil War was difficult. The major crops in the area were corn and wheat. Wheat was the cash crop and corn was used for home consumption and for livestock. In 1880 the U.S. Census indicated that the yield for wheat was about twelve bushels per acre and the average for corn was twenty-eight bushels per acre. Most dairy and beef production was for home consumption. Most work was done by hand or with horse drawn equipment. Later, steam power was gradually introduced for some tasks, such as threshing grain. When compared with modern yields, it can be seen that much work was required for a small return. Grain prices fluctuated for a variety of reasons. There was great interest in building railroads and many were constructed, but the closest railheads to the North River area were at Staunton and Harrisonburg. Roads were often impassable because of the weather and there was no state system of roads. During this period farmers did organize to secure better conditions. The Farmers Alliance and the Grange were two such organizations and a chapter of the Grange existed at Moscow for several years.

Several additional commercial enterprises appeared along Mossy Creek following the Civil War. David Kyle was operating a flour mill just below Mossy Creek Church and the remains of the dam for the mill pond can still be seen. Felix Sheets built a paper mill upstream nearer to Mt. Solon and produced fine paper. These efforts, plus the construction of several new churches, suggest that some economic vitality had returned to the area.

A major political issue in Virginia was paying the state debt that lingered from before the Civil War. Those in favor of paying the debt were called Funders and those who wanted to adjust the debt downward were called Re-adjusters. In 1878 D. Newton Van Lear, who lived near Mt. Solon, was elected to the House of Delegates from Augusta County as a Re-adjuster. Many in the North River area favored his position, but many in Augusta County were Funders.

As all of these events unfolded, life in the area for the average individual remained bucolic. Dr. J. T. Clark, a physician in Mt. Solon noted



in 1882 that the village consisted of 34 dwellings, one Methodist Church, ten shops, a tannery, five stores, and an agricultural implement dealer. He concluded his description by noting that “we have one school teacher, two lightning rod peddlers, numerous nostrum dealers, the County Treasurer, and the usual proportion of gentlemen of leisure.”

### **Entering the twentieth century: 1901-1950**

As mentioned earlier, the construction of railroads was of major interest in the late 1800s. The Chesapeake and Western Railroad envisioned building a system that would link cities of the east with West Virginia and the Ohio Valley. The railroad reached Bridgewater in 1895 and a large celebration was held. Then in 1901 it was completed to Mossy Creek, continued on to Mt. Solon and reached North River Gap in 1902 where the boomtown of Stokesville was to develop. Plans called for the railroad to cross the Alleghenies and continue on to the west, but engineering difficulties aborted the plans.

The impact of this endeavor on the economic and social life of the North River area was incredible. The new road connected with the B&O in Harrisonburg and the Shenandoah Valley Railroad at Elkton. Railroad depots were built at Mossy Creek, Mt. Solon, and Stokesville which was named for one of the owners. The primary source of business for the railroad was the timber and bark which was being taken from the mountain sides west of Stokesville. Also, a deposit of coal was discovered on Little River at the Dora Mine.

A town of some 3,000 residents stood around the railhead at Stokesville at the peak of its growth. In addition to the depot, a roundhouse, a tannery, numerous stores, and a hotel were built in the boomtown and hundreds of men found work in logging and other businesses. Narrow gauge railroads were built into the mountains to bring logs to the railhead. Traces of one of these narrow gauge roadbeds can still be seen beside North River all the way to Camp Todd just several miles below the crest of Shenandoah Mountain.

The coal at the Dora Mine proved to be of low quality and after a decade or so the timber supplies were being exhausted. One railroad official noted in 1925 that he knew of no large stands of timber within twenty-five miles of the railroad between Bridgewater and Stokesville. Service between Mt. Solon and Stokesville was discontinued in 1925, but the railroad sought to continue by relying on agricultural trade to maintain profitability.

Although Stokesville was the primary focus of the C&W, other activities along the rail line impacted the area. In 1902 Samuel Forrer, son of



*Stokesville, circa 1910.*



*New mill built at Mossy Creek ca. 1905*

Daniel Forrer, sold land to the Augusta Milling and Mercantile Company and a new flour mill was built at Mossy Creek. The mill advertised that it could produce one hundred barrels of flour from Shenandoah Valley wheat in twenty-four hours. About 1920 there was an effort to build a new concrete dam for the mill, but the new dam failed to hold water. Because of the debt incurred from this project the property was sold in 1926 and is currently owned by Bruce Knicely.

The C&W Railroad constructed a park on the mill pond at Mossy



*Mossy Creek Park*



*Campers at Woodell Springs*

*Former chapel at Moscow that now serves as a residence.*



Creek soon after the railroad was completed. The park had a band stand built over the water. Boating and swimming were available to those who came from Harrisonburg and points east for a day of recreation. A Bridge-water newspaper reported in 1905 that more than three thousand persons gathered at the park to celebrate the Fourth of July holiday.

Another site where people visited to enjoy nature was Woodell Springs on Little River above Stokesville. The large spring offered cool mountain water and relief from the summer heat. Many groups visited the spring as a summer vacation. At some point, a large building was erected and rooms were available for visitors. The springs disappeared in the 1949 flood.

Stock pens were built at Mt. Solon and this aided in the shipment of cattle to market. A bank also was chartered in the village in 1909 and probably continued until the Great Depression. According to Dudley Rexrode, the bank was robbed, the safe was damaged, and had to be replaced. Water cress in the Cress Pond downstream from Mt. Solon was gathered, placed in barrels of water, and shipped to Washington and Baltimore. There also was a Ford dealership in Mt. Solon. A correspondent to the Harrisonburg newspaper stated in 1920 that "Ford fever is spreading and a few new cases have been reported. The symptoms are not alarming and patients are doing well."

The railroad also provided easier travel to residents of the North River area. A letter written by Samuel Forrer in 1911 illustrates this benefit. He wrote:

One morning last week Ginnie (his second wife) said to me. 'Why don't you go to Roanoke to the Horticulture Convention?' I said 'It is most to late to get ready before train time.' She said, 'Oh get ready.' I said, 'well if you get my clothes our and pack my grip I believe I will go.' So I hustled around, shaved and dressed myself and off I went when the train came.



Undoubtedly others took advantage of the increased opportunity for travel.

Church membership probably reached its highest point during the 1920s. Mossy Creek Church constructed two chapels, one at Sangerville and another at Moscow, about 1900. Religious services continued at these sites until after World War II when the automobile made them unnecessary. Both still stand and serve as residences.

In 1919 the Mt. Solon Medicine Company was established with the stated purpose of "providing medicines for improving the health of both man and beast in all of the states of the Union and the District of Columbia." Other companies chartered during the period were the Mt. Solon Lime Company in 1919 and the Mt. Solon Mercantile Company in 1921.

Schools were improved during these years and high schools were being established. The school year for elementary schools was expanded from six months to nine months. There had been a high school at Parnassus as early as the 1880s and the school continued to offer instruction in 1920. The high school at Centerville was opened in 1913 and the high school at Towers was started in 1925. In 1930 these high schools were consolidated into North River High School near Moscow.

The impact of World War I on the area is difficult to gauge. Flour mills were busy making flour for the war effort. A project was undertaken in the 1920s to identify men who served in this war. Three men were named in Augusta County records for the North River area and included Harvey Sanger from Mt. Solon, Wert Wise from Centerville, and also J. T. Stoutamyre from Centerville. Freddie Hottle from Mt. Solon is also known to have served. In 1918 influenza epidemic spread throughout the area and many, including the wife of the pastor of Mossy Creek Church, lost their lives.

Country stores flourished at various locations in the area. These served to provide local residents with "store bought" goods. A clerk in a store in Mt. Solon recalled that some farmers from West Virginia brought grain over Shenandoah Mountain to the mill at Mt. Solon to be ground. The money secured from the sale of grain was then used to secure necessary provisions for the coming winter. These stores also served as meeting places for men and boys who gathered in the evening to share the latest news and to discuss the weather.

The Great Depression of the 1930s dealt a severe blow to residents of the North River area. In 1933 the C&W discontinued service between Bridge-water and Mt. Solon. The rails and cross ties were removed and a distinctive feature of the area was gone. The dam at Kyle's mill had failed and the mill



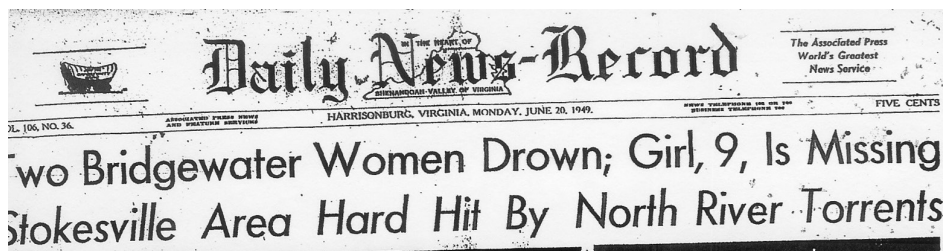


*North River High School ca. 1951*

pond there became a meadow on the Walter Reeves farm. For a while the mill continued and was powered by a gasoline engine, but soon it was gone also. After the upper dam failed the lower dam began to fill with silt and resembled a large marsh with a stream flowing through it. The forests in the mountains to the west were depleted and soil erosion was a large problem in area. Much wildlife such as deer and turkeys had almost disappeared. During some years wheat was selling for a dollar a bushel. These conditions caused some residents to go elsewhere to seek employment. One farmer in the Mossy Creek area was asked later about the decline in population and he observed that "there used to be the upper dam people and the lower dam people, but soon there were few dam people at all."

By 1940 all of Europe was engaged in World War II and in 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. America was again at war and countless men for the North River area were inducted into the armed forces. Many spent months and years in places that would have been unknown to them prior to the conflict. A number of these men lost their lives in service to their country. Tom Mohler, Ray Hogshead, Rudolph Myers and others would never return to their homes. Many other lives were changed by these events and life for many would never be the same as they found jobs in factories and urban businesses. Life on the home front was marked by scarcity of many goods and various forms of rationing were established. The war ended in 1945 and the area again addressed more peaceful pursuits. A few new automobiles began to appear on area roads and the economy slowly recovered from the effects of the Depression and the war.

On Friday, June 17, 1949, black clouds hang over the area and a continuous downpour fell on the North River area and the surrounding region. The rainfall was greatest in the mountains to the west and soon landslides



*Newspaper headlines about 1949 flood. (Courtesy Bruce Knicely)*

blocked streams. Then a chain reaction occurred and one blockage after another gave way and created a great wall of water that issued from North River Gap at Stokesville and from other mountain gaps. The whole area around North River was inundated as the water rushed downstream toward Bridgewater and Mt. Crawford. Numerous homes were destroyed and most of the remaining structures at Stokesville disappeared forever. Steel bridges at Towers and Spring Creek were washed away and many roads were destroyed. At least two residents of Bridgewater lost their lives in the flash flood that raced through the town. This flood was probably the largest recorded natural disaster to strike the North River area in its entire history.

### **Conclusion**

Later in August of 1949 a summer thunderstorm passed over the area and the old wooden dam at Mossy Creek gave way. The mill pond became a muddy flat and by the next summer was filled with weeds and other vegetation. One of the last remaining visual reminders of the history of the area was gone. In one sense, its passing was symbolic of the changes that have occurred in the area in recent decades. Few members of the present generation appreciate the vitality that has marked life in the North River area since the first settlers arrived in the 1700s. Life cannot be lived in the past, but an appreciation of the history of the area may be an important factor in maintaining a vibrant sense of community for present and future generations.

# Book Reviews

By Daniel A. Métraux

*Editor's Note: The following section consists of reviews of recent books on regional and Virginia history as well as several that pertain to American history. Unless otherwise noted, these reviews are by AHB Book Review Editor and Associate Editor Daniel A. Métraux, retired Professor of Asian Studies at Mary Baldwin University. Please send any reviews or questions about reviews to the AHB's Book Review Editor Daniel Métraux at [dmetraux@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:dmetraux@marybaldwin.edu). The deadline for all reviews is November 1, 2020.*

## Virginia History

**Kenneth E. Koons and Nancy T. Sorrells, *Grain Into Gold: Milling & Distilling on the Dividing Waters* (An exhibit and book). Lexington, Va.: Mountain Valley Preservation Alliance, 2019. xi+74 pp. ISBN: 978-1-934368-47-3. \$25.**

Local historians Kenneth E. Koons and Nancy T. Sorrells curated the exhibit "Grain into Gold: Milling & Distilling on the Divided Waters" that was on display at the Brownsburg Museum in northern Rockbridge County from 2016 to 2017. The goal of the exhibit was to demonstrate the historical importance of grist milling and distilling in the two Valley counties, Augusta and Rockbridge. The purpose of this book is to preserve in print the content of the exhibit.

Today anybody driving through this part of the Valley will see large expanses of pastureland for the grazing of beef cattle. This is certainly evident to anybody who walks along Bell's Lane on the outskirts of Staunton. Agriculture continues to play a critical role in counties like Augusta and Rockbridge to this day. Conditions in the past, however, were very different. From the latter part of the eighteenth century through much of the 1930s, Valley farmers practiced general, mixed farming with a strong emphasis on wheat. They also grew large quantities of corn, hay and various small cereal grains and raised livestock such as cattle, horses, sheep, pigs and barnyard fowl, but wheat was the dominant crop. The Valley's high yields of wheat led to its critical recognition as the "breadbasket of the Confederacy." Valley farmers continued producing vast quantities of wheat after the Civil War, so much so that in 1900 they grew nearly forty percent of all wheat produced in the whole of Virginia.

The authors devote much of their writing to the traditional agricultural economy of the region:

The market value of wheat derived from its conversion to flour; in order for the grain to become a merchantable commodity, farmers had to haul it to a local grist mill and have it ground into flour. Thus, Shenandoah Valley farmers' high and increasing levels of wheat production led to the construction of large numbers of gristmills throughout rural districts of the region. By the early nineteenth century, grist mills formed a ubiquitous element of ordinary landscapes of the Valley. Similarly, farmers' excess production of other grains, especially corn and rye – the main ingredients of whiskey – led to the emergence of commercial distilleries in the region. In this way, farming and the industrial processing of grains were interdependent; the success of one economic activity depended upon, indeed required, the success of the other (vii).

Sorrells and Koons analyze and describe the complex process of milling and distilling throughout this short but very explicit and colorful text. We learn about the complex process of harvesting the grain and the importance of grist mills to the region's economy. There are some marvelous pictures of local mill sites, some of which are still standing.

Even more fascinating is a discussion of the production of alcohol in this region. During much of the late eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth centuries, Americans consumed great quantities of alcohol, either as fermented beverages as cider, ale, and beer or distilled beverages such as rum, brandy, and whiskey. The proliferation of stills and the production of whiskey played a dominant role in this region and in the Valley as a whole. In the eighteenth century, nearly a quarter of all estate inventories listed stills and many farms produced whiskey as a side product—indeed there were many cases where mills and stills sprang up alongside each other. By 1810 Augusta County led the entire state in whiskey production, producing 250,000 gallons annually. Much of the whiskey was consumed locally or regionally, but there was a generous export to other parts of the new republic.

The authors devote a lot of attention to the construction of mills, the process of distilling, the diversity of operations at mills and on farms, the importance of taxes on whiskey as a source of government revenue and much more. We learn about such matters as "Turning Whiskey into Moonshine," the evolution of the legal production of whiskey to the illegal production of what was commonly known as moonshine. Sections are also devoted to the production of whiskey jugs to contain the drink and the art of coopering. There is a very informative section on how the transportation of flour and whiskey led to vast improvements of local roads.

There is a fascinating discussion of the very complex subject of farms, mills and distilleries as vertically integrated enterprises:

Vertically integrated business enterprises result when a producer of raw materials builds the infrastructure for processing them. Enterprising farmers sometimes developed a vertically-integrated business by building (or buying) a grist mill as an extension of their agricultural activities. In some cases millers also integrated distilleries into their enterprises and farmers built distilleries on their farms. Both milling and distilling operations often raised pork in large quantities as part of the business. In several instances, coopers lived next to millers, almost certainly because the two trades complemented one another (61).

The lengthy era of grains and grist mills began to slowly die between the world wars. Wheat fields became rich pastures for cattle or fields of hay and corn. Flour grains became an important commodity of the Midwest where huge mills were built and prohibition ended the legal distilling industry, further discouraging farmers from growing small grains.

Authors Koons and Sorrells have produced a very handsome volume that is meticulously researched and clearly presented so that lay readers such as myself can readily understand the complex agricultural economy of this region before World War II. There are dozens of very beautiful pictures and illustrations ranging from historic mills to the tools necessary to run a farm, mill, or distillery. The authors handle a very complex topic in a very clear and precise manner. The book itself is an important and major work of art that deserves recognition far and wide for the critical subjects that it covers.

**Gregory D. Smithers, *Native Southerners: Indigenous History from Origins to Removal*. Norman Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019. 259 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8061-6228-7.**

Almost any book or course concerning the history of Virginia or any other state in the Southeast would begin with the coming of the first Europeans in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. The story would then follow the course of European settlement through to the modern era. Only scant attention is most often given to the Native Americans who had lived in what is now the Southeast for many thousands of years before the coming of the European invader and who had interacted in so many ways with the Europeans throughout their history here.

We are therefore lucky that George D. Smithers, Professor of History at Virginia Commonwealth University, has written a very detailed history of Native Americans. His new book, *Native Southerners: Indigenous History*



*from Origins to Removal*, fills the gap left by other histories of the region. Smithers writes describes his work as follows:

Actually, the book covers tens of thousands of years. That's what makes Native histories in the Southeast so rich and dynamic. The common thread running through the book is the importance of storytelling in Native communities. This remains true today. Oral narratives, artistic expression, religion and ceremony, and the emergence of literary traditions, connect Native Southerners to a deep history that revolves around kinship and community. And within those kinship communities, Native Southerners nurtured stories about origins, religion and politics, science and medicine, engineering, astronomy, and above all, the importance of community. Western ideas about individualism were (and remain) anathema to Native storytelling traditions that emphasized kinship communities as fundamental to identity and an enriching life.

Early chapters deal with the pre-European life of these Native Southerners. The region had a large Native population divided among many different tribes, cultures, and subcultures. Smithers notes the contradictory evidence of the original habitat of the natives and the length of time they have inhabited the region. He comments that recent DNA testing has not been terribly helpful in that it indicates a wide variety of backgrounds, places of origin, and length of time their ancestors have been here.

The core of the book studies the interrelationships between Natives and the growing numbers of white Europeans. During the "Chieftdom Era" of the 1600s white settlements dealt closely with a wide number of Native nations ("Chieftdoms"). One surprising trade item was Indians captured by other natives and sold to whites as slaves in the 1600s before the largescale importation of African slaves. Sadly, during the 1600s and 1700s the Native communities were devastated by such diseases as small pox, the slave trade, and constant fighting not only between Europeans and Natives, but also among the tribal groups themselves.

The late 1700s and early 1800s saw increased conflict between native tribes and Europeans. The great commodity was land and the problem was the ever expanding march westward of European settlement. As white settlers moved west, they invariably came into conflict with Native tribes who rightly feared the loss of their land and livelihoods. The inevitable conflicts drove native groups westward and finally in the early 1800s the forced diaspora of Native groups across the Mississippi River to a specially designated Indian Territory, which now is the state of Oklahoma. Smithers devotes a whole chapter to this tragic forced removal of Natives away from the East.

Despite the forced removal of people like the Cherokees, Smithers reminds us that Native communities still exist in Virginia and the Southeast:

Most Americans think that there are no longer indigenous people and communities in the Southeast. That's wrong. There remain vibrant Native communities across the Southeast. The Eastern Band of Cherokee [Indians] and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians are two examples of how Native Southerners continue to nurture their history, traditions and language. At the same time, Native Southerners don't refer to themselves in the past tense, as often happens in the broader culture. True to their storytelling traditions, Native Southerners keep their cultures and collective identities alive because they're constantly innovating those stories and cultural traditions. That's an indication of the continued vibrancy and creativity that exists in Indian country throughout the Southeast.

Smithers' *Native Southerners* is a very well researched and written history of Natives in the Southeast. The book itself is literally packed to the brim with good information, which is both a blessing and a curse. The information provided is critical in fostering our understanding of the history of Native Americans here, but there is so much detail given that the reader can easily lose track of the major themes that the author wants us to focus on. There is a need for a strong conclusion where the author would much more clearly reiterate the major points of his work.

**Jonathan Noyalas, *Civil War Legacy in the Shenandoah: Remembrance, Reunion, and Reconciliation*. Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2016. 191 pp. ISBN: 978-1-62619-888-3.**

The Shenandoah Valley experienced some of the hardest and most destructive fighting of the Civil War. There were 325 combat or battle incidents and huge losses of life on both sides. The city of Winchester experienced over seventy takeovers by Union or Confederate troops. Union troops under General Sheridan crushed Confederate forces led by General Jubal Early at the Battle of Cedar Creek in October 1864 and then charged up the Valley toward Staunton burning a large number of barns and recently harvested crops. Sheridan's burning of the Valley enraged residents and created a loathing for Sheridan that remains to this day.

Jonathan A. Noyalas, formerly a professor of history at Lord Fairfax Community College in Middletown, Virginia, and now a professor at Shenandoah University and Director of the McCormick Civil War Institute, presents a detailed and fascinating study of life in the Valley after Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox in April, 1865. Noyalas focuses almost entirely on the deep emotional scars that festered long after the fighting ceased. The Valley, despite its closeness to the Mason-Dixon Line, remained deeply committed to the Confederate cause throughout the war and deeply

resented the destruction caused by Sheridan's troops in the final stages of the war. The task facing Valley residents was how and when they would be able to reintegrate themselves into the United States now that the Confederacy was dead. The largely successful reintegration process that started in the early 1880s is the focus of Noyalas's book.

When the war ended citizens in both North and South strove to come to terms with the results of the war and make the necessary steps to become one nation again. The initiative came from moves by former Union officers and soldiers in New England who formed the Sheridan's Veterans Association (SVA) to bring them together with former Confederates in the Valley. The big question was "Could the former enemies not only learn to get along together, but also find deeply sincere reconciliation?" "Could the former adversaries not only forgive each other, but also honor and embrace each other?" Noyalas's response is yes, they could, and they did.

When a big trainload of SVA veterans arrived in Winchester in 1883, they had no idea what to expect, but they were surprised to find that many residents of this former Confederate stronghold greeted them with open arms. Good relations grew when both groups began talking to each other. Relations improved even more when the SVA veterans visited a Confederate graveyard to honor the former enemy soldiers buried there.

Later visits by larger and larger SVA-type groups from the North throughout the 1880s and later helped to strengthen this reconciliation and rebuilding effort. The battlefields of the Valley became places for veterans on both sides to find common ground, to develop warmer feelings for each other, and to find common ground and healing through remembrance. Confederate veterans remained proud of the efforts during the war to create a new nation and showed no sense of shame at their defeat. Except for a few holdouts like General Jubal Early, they acknowledged the reality of their defeat and embraced the efforts by Union veterans to bring about a successful reconciliation.

Staunton in the mid-1880s saw a visit by former Union General William Averell as part of this reconciliation process. Noyalas writes that Averell

visited Staunton, Virginia, to participate with Governor Fitzhugh Lee, a former cavalry foe in the Shenandoah Valley, in a joint memorial ceremony to honor the memory of soldiers "Blue and Gray." During his remarks, Governor Lee turned to Averell and told him "your presence here under these happy auspices clearly indicates that we are in the dawn of revived national feeling and that we now have peace that is disturbed by no cannons, save those fired in memory of the brave and honored soldiers who fell in both armies." During his remarks, General Averell informed the crowd that he and many of his men felt great regret for

what they had done during Sheridan's 1864 Shenandoah Campaign in bringing the war against the civilian population. He noted that it was difficult for him to see "women come out of their gates with white faces and disheveled hair" pleading with Union troops to protect them and not destroy their property.

The decorations for the memorial service also embodied a sentiment of reconciliation. Special arches of evergreen that spanned Staunton's main street and decorated the front of city hall had the words, "Our honored dead—Blue and Gray" emblazoned on them. A correspondent for the *Staunton Spectator* found the arches "beautifully appropriate, and sacred in the affections of all hearts" (99).

Noyalas's *Civil War Legacy* is well researched and very clearly written. Noyalas uses excellent primary source material to back his main conclusions. He covers a topic that other historians have long neglected. This book is one which should be devoured by students of Civil War history. It demonstrates a model way in which two former enemy groups can come together in a spirit of reconciliation after a harsh and destructive conflict.

**James Corbett David, *Dunmore's New World: The Extraordinary Life of a Royal Governor in Revolutionary America—with Jacobites, Counterfeiters, Land Schemes, Shipwrecks, Scalping, Indian Politics, Runaway Slaves, and Two Illegal Royal Weddings*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2015. 270pp. ISBN: 978-0-8139-3424-2.**

John Murray, fourth Earl of Dunmore, generally known as Lord Dunmore, was a Scottish peer and colonial governor in the American colonies and later in the Bahamas. He came to America in 1770 to serve as royal governor in New York and a year later received an appointment as the last royal governor of Virginia.

Lord Dunmore (1730-1809) remains a controversial figure in the annals of British and American history. He was a Scottish aristocrat with a family history of treason against the British crown. Dunmore and his father John Murray joined the ill-fated campaign of Charles Edward Stuart, better known as "Bonnie Prince Charlie" in 1745. After the campaign met its decisive defeat at Culloden, the Murray family was put under house arrest with William facing imprisonment in the tower of London. William received a conditional pardon in 1750 and his son John joined the British army. John became the fourth Earl of Dunmore in 1756 following the deaths of his father and uncle. He served with distinction in the House of Lords before receiving the subsequent governorships in New York and Virginia.

Dunmore was a strong supporter of the British imperial system, a

stance that would lead to his virtual ouster as Royal Governor of Virginia at the outset of the American Revolution. Historian James Corbett David carefully weaves together the complicated and controversial tenure of Dunmore in Virginia. He explains in great detail the complicated factors behind Dunmore's expedition against the Shawnee and Mingo Indians in the Ohio Valley, which led to the opening of the Kentucky country to white European settlement. Dunmore's 1774 war marked the last time that British and American forces fought together against a commonly perceived enemy and even led to the governor's brief visit to Staunton and Augusta County that year.

The year 1775 was a crisis year for both Governor Dunmore and the people of Virginia. The ill-timed Gunpowder Incident of April 1775 united many Virginia politicians against him and forced him to abandon the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg in order to seek the safety of a British ship off the coast. It was from this ship that he issued his infamous proclamation declaring martial law in Virginia and promising freedom for slaves and indentured servants of American revolutionaries who deserted their owners and joined royalist forces. Despite his 1775 proclamation promising freedom to slaves of Virginia rebels, it is ironic that Dunmore himself was himself a slaveholder in Virginia.

Author James Corbett David notes that

Dunmore was an unusual figure. Despite a family history of armed opposition to the House of Hanover, he managed to obtain a commission in the British army, a seat in the House of Lords, and three executive appointments in the American colonies. The influence he had, though moderate in the grand imperial scheme, gave him the latitude to safely break with convention in a number of ways. In addition to his controversial proclamation of emancipation, he undertook an unauthorized Indian War in the Ohio Valley. Later, he purchased Native American slaves at a time when the African (let alone Indian) slave trade was facing tremendous popular opposition. Ever bending and breaking the rules in defense of the system that ensured his privilege, Dunmore was a transgressive imperialist. As such, he provides an opportunity to explore the boundaries of what was possible in the Atlantic world at the end of the eighteenth century (186)

David's interesting, well-written and well-researched study of Dunmore offers an interesting perspective of Virginia history and the struggle between whites and Native Americans in the lands to the West of the Valley of Virginia.



## General American History

**David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018. 912 pp. ISBN: 978-1416590316.**

There was a prevailing belief in nineteenth century America that African Americans lacked the basic intelligence, ingenuity, and leadership potential of white people. Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) almost single-handedly proved them wrong. Douglass was a brilliant orator, writer, newspaper editor, and diplomat who emerged in the 1840s as one of the nation's most prominent social reformers and abolitionists. His strong leadership led to his becoming the leader of African-American society for the bulk of the century.

Born into bondage in Virginia, he was the son of a slave mother and an unknown white father. His mother died early, forcing Douglass to live as a young slave with other family members. A slave owner's wife took the young man with her to Baltimore where she taught him to read on the sly. When her husband caught on and forced her to stop this practice, he bought the book *Columbia Orator* to further his reading ability and to learn notions of freedom, liberty, and human rights. Back in Virginia, he began teaching fellow slaves to read.

He escaped his life of bondage in 1838 at age twenty and found his way to New Bedford, Massachusetts. After several years of odd jobs, he moved to Rochester New York and found a mentor, the radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison encouraged Douglass to speak about his life as a slave to audiences throughout and beyond Massachusetts. He quickly became a talented and wise orator who cast shame on the institution of slavery. He founded the newspaper *North Star*, which added to his fame as a frequent public lecturer all over the North and as a major spokesman in favor of abolition. He tried in vain to persuade John Brown to call off his Harper's Ferry raid to no avail. When his time with Brown became public knowledge, he briefly moved to Canada and then on to England where his lectures found huge and supportive audiences.

Back in the United States in 1861, Douglass quickly saw the war as a golden opportunity to destroy slavery. He successfully demanded that the Union Army enlist blacks and he went as far as to recruit many of them, including his own sons, into uniform. After the war he became an advocate of black enfranchisement and equal rights. He served in the administrations of three presidents capping his career as the American ambassador to Haiti not long before his death in 1895. He wrote three widely-read best-selling autobiographies at different stages of his life, which served to enhance his reputation.

David Bright has written an incredibly detailed, well-researched, and well written biography of Douglass. This work justifiably won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 2019. My only criticism is that at times the text is far too long, often too detailed, and seems a bit repetitious. Nevertheless, any reader who “goes all the way” will appreciate the importance of Douglass as a public figure along with his many strengths and occasional weaknesses. A very brilliant biography.

**Gregory May, *Jefferson's Treasure: How Albert Gallatin Saved the New Nation from Debt*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery History, 2018. 512 pp. ISBN: 978-1-62157-645-7.**

Probably one of the most important political and economic questions throughout American history focuses on the key role of the federal government. Should there be a strong and all-powerful government in place levying high taxes or should we have a smaller, more efficient political system with lower taxes and greater power in the hands of the various states and local communities? This controversy dates back to the very beginning of American political history in the 1790s when Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton did his utmost to construct a strong central government that would play a dominant role in American society. The opposition to Hamilton's vision was led by Swiss-born politician and economic theorist Albert Gallatin (1761-1849) who served as Thomas Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury for eight years and for an additional four years under James Madison. Financial historian Gregory May presents an excellent portrayal of Gallatin's role in constructing an alternative view of the role of government in this recent biography of this nearly forgotten founding father.

Hamilton's vision of a powerful federal state was countered by Thomas Jefferson and his coterie of Republican leaders who resisted the idea of a strong central government. They felt that such a state with its high taxes and many regulations would hamper the freedom of individuals and local communities to determine the course of their own lives. Modern historians agree that one of the most enduring achievements of the Jefferson administration was the containment of the federal government by restraining its fiscal power.

The Treasury Department was the dominant bureau of the federal government throughout the early years of the American republic and the Secretary of the Treasury was the chief architect of the government's fiscal policy. Presidents Washington and John Adams had their Alexander

Hamilton while Jefferson and Madison had Albert Gallatin. Gallatin, a well- educated Swiss born activist who emigrated to the United States in the early 1780s, served as Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury for eight years followed by an additional four years under Madison.

Gallatin was the architect of Jefferson's efforts to curtail the growing role of the federal government. While in office Gallatin abolished internal taxes in peacetime, slashed spending and repaid much of the national debt that had mushroomed under Hamilton. Gregory May notes that

Gallatin's views on public finance rested on the premise that most government spending retards economic improvement because it consumes capital. Gallatin thought military spending, which together with interest on the public debt accounted for substantially all of the federal government's spending, was particularly wasteful because war destroyed capital. Funded debt did not benefit the public, Gallatin argued, because funding made borrowing easier, borrowing made spending easier and military spending made the government more likely to get into war. Interest payments on the public debt shifted money from productive taxpayers to wealthy speculators and investors who were likely to waste it on luxuries. The country could not fulfill its potential, he claimed, unless the government restrained spending and repaid the national debt (xxv).

Gregory May has written a brilliant study of Gallatin's life that is more than a simple biography. It is a fascinating discussion of the contrasting fiscal policies of Hamilton and Gallatin that continue today. My only real criticism is May's failure to bring much attention to Gallatin's career after he left the Treasury in 1812. He served in a variety of positions including ambassador to France, but we learn little about this part of Gallatin's life. However, May's coverage of Gallatin's role as Treasury Secretary is superb and should be read by any student or scholar interested in the early years of the American republic.

**Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Leadership in Turbulent Times*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018. 475pp. ISBN: 978-4767-9592-8.**

This is a valuable book written by one of the most gifted historians of the modern era. The focus of this work is the concept of leadership. What are the qualities that make a strong good leader and how does any leader develop these qualities. Are leaders born or made? Where does ambition come from? Are leaders born or made? Where does ambition come from? How does adversity affect the growth of leadership skills and intuition? Does the leader make the times or do the times make the leader?

While there are so many worldwide examples of good leadership,

Doris Kearns Goodwin draws upon four presidents that she has studied most closely: Lincoln, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson. Goodwin focuses on one specific crisis that each of these presidents faced: Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation, Theodore Roosevelt's adept management of the 1902 coal strike, Franklin Roosevelt's actions during the first 100 days of his administration at the height of the Great Depression, and Lyndon Johnson's assertive leadership in the difficult days following the Kennedy assassination during which he engineered the passage of the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights laws.

Kearns divides the book into three sections: 1) Ambition and the Recognition of Leadership; 2) Adversity and Growth; 3) The Leader and the Times: How They Led. Each section contains a chapter on each of her chosen leaders. By reading all twelve chapters we get a chance to compare the early lives of each figure and analyze how each grew into an important and influential leader.

We see that each of these leaders started adult life with severe emotional tests that they had to overcome. Lincoln in his early years had to overcome bouts of suicidal depression and political defeats. Theodore Roosevelt was dealt a heavy blow when both his mother and first wife died in the same house on the same day. FDR had to conquer the adversity brought on by his crippling bout of polio, and LBJ had to experience defeat and rejection in Texas before emerging as a leader.

Each of these leaders had to deal with their personal problems and to surmount them, thereby gaining the grit and determination to carry on. In each case they all emerged better fitted to confront the problems that they faced in public life. Each of these figures shared a common ambition and a deep resilience that allowed them to overcome opposition to their programs and to see a clear way to a better tomorrow. They were each guided by a sense of moral purpose that presumed the public good over personal gain. When facing great challenges, they were able to summon their talents and to grow teams of officials who would together deal with a specific national crisis such as the 1902 coal strike or the Great Depression.

When looking at more contemporary leaders, Goodwin looks back at her four leaders. "While their personal stories came to very different ends, they were all looking beyond their own lives, hopeful that their achievements had shaped and enlarged the future. The fame they craved, the recognition they sought, bears little resemblance to today's cult of celebrity. For these leaders, the final measure of their achievements would be realized by their admittance to an enduring place in communal memory (345)."

Goodwin's well-written and deeply-researched book is something that all students of leadership should read with care. One most deeply appreciates her insights concerning Lyndon Johnson with whom she worked and assisted for many months.

**Jon Meacham, *The Soul of America: The Battle for our Better Angels*. New York: Random House, 2018. 402pp. ISBN: 978-0-399-58981-2.**

Jon Meacham's most recent masterpiece, *The Soul of America*, is best read in tandem with the aforementioned tome by Doris Kearns Goodwin on leadership. Both Meacham and Goodwin confront the question of leadership and how leading figures such as Lincoln, both Roosevelts, and more contemporary figures like Eisenhower, Johnson, Martin Luther King, and others have helped to move the United States in a more morally positive direction.

Meacham looks at the ideals that came with the founding of the United States. The country was supposed to represent a new and better society based on such ideas as freedom, justice for all, true equality, and much more, all of which constitute the absolute soul of America. The attainment of these ideals has always involved deep controversy and struggle. There was the ugly question of slavery, the rise of white nationalism in the form of the KKK after the Civil war, ugly confrontations with each wave of immigrants, the rise of populist autocrats like Huey Long, the savage attacks against supposed communists by Senator McCarthy, the ever-present question of racism and so much more. This struggle for the soul of America continues yet today.

Meacham is deeply anguished by the ascendancy of Donald Trump and his ilk as well as by the deadly white nationalist rallies in Charlottesville in August, 2017. To put these latest developments into better perspective, Meacham returns to other moments in American history, starting with Lincoln, when fear and national division were running rampant. Through his eyes we can see that our current national turmoil and division is not unprecedented, that as a nation we have the ability to survive national catastrophe—that we have had more troubling times in the past such as the Civil War and the racial crisis of the 1960s—but that we as a nation are always resilient and that we have survived each of these crises.

Meacham, however, is the first to admit that the achievement of the soul of America, the American dream, has never been automatic. Indeed, it is always a struggle between opposing forces. There has been violence



such as the Civil War and political trauma such as the rise of the likes of Huey Long and Joe McCarthy. Meacham congratulates the United States for having a string of strong, quite liberal leaders who have steered the country through all of these great crises—the likes of such activist presidents as Lincoln, both Roosevelts, Truman, and Johnson. These leaders replaced fear with hope and worked to reverse injustice and to expand equality. Our better moments live in that portion of the American soul that inspired the Square Deal, the New Deal, and the Great Society.

Meacham's book points to the ideals of the United States that have made this country successful and unique. Today we face a crisis of division, but if Meacham is right, in due course we will overcome our current divisions. I certainly hope so. A fine read!

**Dan Abrams and David Fisher, *Lincoln's Last Trial: The Murder Case That Propelled Him to the Presidency*. Toronto: Hanover Square Press, 2018. 287 pp. ISBN: 978-1-335-42469-3.**

Abraham Lincoln has been the subject of perhaps more books than any other American over the past century. I have read over a dozen Lincoln books over the past decade and despaired at the thought of reading yet another tome, but when I spotted the book *Lincoln's Last Trial*, I was intrigued by the topic. I know a lot about Lincoln the politician, but virtually nothing about his life as a lawyer.

Authors Dan Abrams and David Fisher present a very detailed study of the murder trial of twenty-two-year-old Peachy Quinn Harrison held in Springfield, Illinois, late in the summer of 1859. The authors are able to bring the trial back to life because a court stenographer, Robert Hitt, produced an accurate record transcript of the whole trial.

Another young man, Greek Crafton, also a resident of the Springfield area, had threatened Harrison many times with physical harm. In 1859, Peachy and Greek got into a fight at a drugstore and Peachy plunged a four-inch, white-handled knife into Greek leaving him mortally wounded. Crafton and some of his friends had been bullying Harrison and were out to beat him up. Harrison knew of their intentions and armed himself with a knife for self-protection. Prosecutors claimed that Harrison deliberately planned to kill his attacker and charged him with murder. Harrison's family needed a good defense attorney and were friendly with the best-known defense lawyer in Illinois, Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln spent four sweltering days, from August 31 to September 3, 1859 in the Sangamon Circuit Court in his hometown, successfully defending

Harrison against a charge of murder. Lincoln based his defense on the premise that Harrison was justified in killing his attacker when the prosecution said that he was never threatened with bodily harm.

The authors Dan Abrams and David Fisher make use of the one hundred page trial transcript, which was recently discovered in a garage in California among the papers of a descendent of Harrison. The transcript tells us a great deal about Lincoln as a lawyer—he was painstaking about details and very probing in cross-examination. His language was informal so as to gain the confidence of the jury, but he was no country hick—anything but. Indeed, the transcript shows how carefully Lincoln built his case for self-defense. He was, to say the least, one of the most skilled and respected defense lawyers in the state of Illinois.

Lincoln had gained national fame in the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates and by 1859 had garnered growing support for a presidential bid in 1860. His work as a defense attorney in the Harrison trial drew national attention. A successful defense would win him favorable attention while a loss would diminish his stature. Fortunately for Lincoln, the jury returned a not guilty verdict.

*Lincoln's Last Trial* provides an excellent view of Lincoln as a trial lawyer and demonstrates why he had broad public support even though he had only served one short term in Congress. There is even a brief mention of the Lincoln family in Augusta County, Virginia, (now Rockingham County) and its connections with Lincoln in Springfield.

I do have one fundamental complaint. The authors add in short comments noting that Lincoln and other participants at times scowled, showed signs of fatigue and so on. There is no way that the authors could find references to body movements and gestures and it is wrong to add them into the text. The authors in another publication said that they had no way of knowing if and when somebody in the courtroom laughed or grunted. They added such inferences to bring life to their book. Such theatrics, however, do not belong in a serious work of history.

**Dan Abrams and David Fisher, *Theodore Roosevelt for the Defense: The Courtroom Battle to Save his Legacy*. Toronto: Hanover Square Press, 2019. 379pp. ISBN: 978-1-335-01644-7.**

I grew up in Greenwich Village in New York City in the 1950s and early 1960s at a time when political bosses in areas such as Tammany Hall still had some power. The whole concept of Tammany Hall and “Bosses”

was severely criticized by intellectuals and political reformers as being corrupt and thwarting the democratic process. The corruption of the likes of Boss Tweed certainly gave the political boss system a bad name, but in truth they could be a mixed blessing. They provided jobs for tens of thousands of immigrants and they could exert their power for the public good when persuaded.

One of the most contentious issues in my part of New York during my childhood was an effort by master builder Robert Moses to run a major highway under the arch and through Washington Square. The Square was the nearest play area for me and my friends and the idea of a major highway bisecting the park horrified us and our parents. Liberal groups and demonstrations led by Congressman John Lindsay made a lot of noise, but seemed powerless to stop the Moses juggernaut. Finally some concerned folks decided to approach Tammany “Boss” Carmine Desapio. Desapio listened to their pleas and then is said to have phoned Mayor Wagner and other leading city politicians. Moses’ highway plan simply disappeared.

Theodore Roosevelt rose to power at the turn of the last century when political bosses controlled both the Democratic and Republican parties in New York State. TR had a unique relationship with such bosses as Thomas Platt—he was willing to work with them if doing so would help him achieve some aspect of his political agenda, but he would denounce the “corruption” of “boss politics” if they stood in his way.

Dan Abrams and David Fisher, who wrote *Lincoln’s Last Trial* reviewed above have composed another worthy courtroom book, *Theodore Roosevelt for the Defense*. The book focuses on a defamation suit brought to trial by William Barnes in 1915 against TR, his former political ally. TR had written a long article in which he blatantly accused Barnes of political corruption. The furious Barnes responded by suing TR for the then enormous sum of \$50,000. Both Barnes and TR had a lot to win or lose in such a trial—their reputations and political legacies were at stake

The trial took place in a crowded courtroom in Syracuse, New York, during the early weeks of May, 1915. The spectacle of Roosevelt defending himself in a lawsuit captured the imagination of the country and more than fifty newspapers sent reporters to cover the trial. A string of witnesses appeared on behalf of both sides including a young Franklin D. Roosevelt, then a rising star in the New York Senate. Theodore Roosevelt spent over a week on the stand withstanding a merciless cross-examination by powerful attorneys representing William Barnes. Their goal was to try to expose TR as a hypocrite who had worked closely in the past with bosses like Barnes and Platt.

Abrams and Fisher's book is overly long and packed with perhaps too much detail and too little analysis, but the authors present a vivid picture of the true nature of American politics just over a century ago when political bosses held sway and ruled by making decisions in smoke-filled rooms. It is interesting how the bosses of both the Republicans and Democrats in New York would work together more often than against each other where they in effect scratched each other's backs. One learns that TR never would have achieved much had he not learned how to work with and sometimes manipulate bosses to get his way. We see Roosevelt the consummate political actor on stage revealing his tactics as a politician and his sometimes uncomfortably close relationship with the likes of Barnes and Platt.

Overall, this book is a captivating look at the rampant corruption in both the democratic and republican parties in New York State in the first two decades of the 20th century. It is also a fine opportunity to study the political philosophy and career of one of our most famous presidents.

**Stephen Brumwell, *Turncoat: Benedict Arnold and the Crisis of American Liberty*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018. 372 pp. ISBN: 978-0-300-21099-6.**

The trap was set. July 1780. General Washington had just given the command of the critically important West Point fortress to one of his most admired generals, Benedict Arnold. Arnold had been one of Washington's most tenacious officers. He had staged an ultimately unsuccessful invasion of Quebec, but months later he built a small naval squadron on Lake Champlain that forestalled a British invasion down the Hudson Valley that would have split the rebellious colonies in half. Arnold's military intelligence and hard fighting led to the catastrophic British defeat at Saratoga, New York. Arnold's strong leadership was felt through early 1780 and Washington did not hesitate giving Arnold the command at West Point.

By then Arnold had established contact with British forces occupying New York City. For the previous six months or more Arnold had been feeding the British useful tidbits of information, but to be accepted by the British, Arnold had to provide the British with some substantial gain. Arnold planned a coup that might have ended the war then and there. Washington was to visit West Point for a meeting with several of his major officers. The capture of Washington, his key generals, and West Point looked a sure thing and Arnold nearly pulled it off. Nobody in Washington's army had the remotest idea of his betrayal. It took the just-by-chance capture

of Captain André by several of Washington's sentinels and revelation of documents hidden in his boot to foil Arnold's plot.

Author Stephen Brumwell devotes considerable time speculating as to the cause of Arnold's grand betrayal. One factor was Arnold's mounting resentment at his treatment by politicians who had impugned his honor and reputation and eventually caused a profound ideological conversion (163). But an even greater motivation was his belief that the "civil war" led by Washington and Congress was destroying the American homeland. The American colonies had grown prosperous as a part of the worldwide British Empire. Departing the empire would create an impoverished, weak and divided land. Arnold stated that his objective was to bring about "a reunion of Great Britain and her colonies "(164). In his mind, his betrayal was not a betrayal at all, but rather an act of loyalty that would bring back peace and prosperity to the colonies.

Brumwell believes that Arnold saw himself as a reborn Major-General George Monck who had fought with Parliamentary forces against the Royalists of Charles I in the British Civil War but who years later used military force to bring about the restoration of Charles II. For his decisive intervention, Monck had earned honors, wealth, and a hereditary title. Arnold expected the same if he could restore the rebellious American colonies to the British. "Arnold would secure the acclaim and social standing that he had always craved...Arnold had come to see himself as the savior of his distressed and distracted countrymen, intent on delivering them from the horrors of another bloody civil war (166)."

I have read several biographies of Arnold, but Brumwell's work is by far the best. He is even and fair in his treatment of Arnold. The writing is clear and incisive and the research is very deep. But one must wonder if Arnold's act of betrayal was made for the better good of the colonies and Britain or just for pecuniary gain and public applause

**John Bicknell, *America 1844: Religious Fervor, Westward Expansion and the Presidential Election that Transformed the Nation*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2016. 305 pp. ISBN: 978-1-61373-010-2.**

Modern history is marked by notable years when certain events or movements transform societies worldwide. This was certainly true in Europe in 1848 when a series of liberal revolutions reverberated across Europe portending the rise of democracy and the defeat of autocracy. Some years in American history saw violence and political upheaval followed by



a conservative counter charge. Historian and author John Bicknell makes a powerful argument that 1844 was one of those calamitous years that changed American history.

Bicknell suggests that the 1844 presidential election was one of the two or three most momentous elections in American history. Senator Henry Clay, a powerful Whig legislator, opposed the annexation of Texas as a slave state predicting that it would upset the delicate balance between North and South. James K. Polk, the surprise Democratic candidate for President and former Speaker of the House, favored annexation and was willing to counter Mexico's efforts to prescribe it.

The election was very close in the popular vote and Polk won several large states by the tiniest of margins. After analyzing the campaign from start to finish, Bicknell suggests that had Clay won the election, today we might be living in a very different nation. Polk's surprise victory strongly encouraged the westward expansion that brought Texas, California, and the Oregon territory into the Union and led to the war with Mexico that led to the American absorbing about half of Mexico's territory.

But there was a lot more going on in the U.S. besides the election. There was religious fermentation of the Second Great Awakening, the rise and fall of the Millerites, the emergence of the Mormons and the murder of Joseph Smith, as well as John C. Fremont's exploration of the West, Charles Goodyear's patenting of vulcanized rubber, and a freak explosion of a naval vessel that almost killed President Tyler.

Bicknell's book is like an instant photograph of a critical moment in time. It is clearly written and well researched – a careful study of a critical time in the growth of American history. It is the kind of book that would be a key aspect of a graduate course in nineteenth century U.S. history.

# Recent Acquisitions of the Augusta County Historical Society from November 2018 to November 2019

## A Report from Donna Huffer, Archivist

*This report consists of a list of newly accessioned, processed, and catalogued collections added to the ACHS holdings between November 1, 2018 and November 1, 2019. The members of the Archives Committee have worked hard to properly prepare and house these collections. I would like to thank my volunteers and Dr. Ken Keller for advising and guiding me as I transitioned into my role as archivist. The members of the committee are John Sherwood, Dr. Charles Blair, Suzanne Fisher, Mack Wilson, Heather Harman, and Joanne Soleiman. Over 442 hours were spent by volunteers transcribing letters, inventorying the library, recording duplicate books for the yard sale and auction, preparing scrapbooks, and wading through boxes of donated papers. They also answered inquiries, found photographs, and helped fifty-eight people from all over the United States, even Hawaii, who came to conduct research at our archives.*

**2018.0054** Donna Huffer Collection. A total of six booklets were donated on behalf of the Staunton-Augusta County African American Research Society. These were:

1. *History of Black Beauticians and Barbers*
2. *The History of D. Webster Davis School & T. C. Edmonds School*
3. *Black Insurance Companies of Staunton, Virginia*
4. *History of Montgomery Hall Park (A Negro Park)*
5. *A Look Back in Time, History of Effie and Johnson Nursery School & Day Care Center March 9, 1939 to June 1997.*
6. *Marie M. Miller Benevolent Nursing Home (First Black Nursing Home in Staunton)* Accessioned November 29, 2018, donated by Donna Huffer.

**2018.0055** Kate Smith Collection. This collection contains sheet music of the song "When the Moon Comes over the Mountain," sung by Kate Smith. Hanging in Library Room. Donated by Edwin Dooley. Also, because of misnumbering of the above accession, a copy of a photograph of Summit Hill School dated 1895 was added. Summit Hill School was located in Centerville in the North River District. A handwritten roster of the stu-

dents and teacher was included. Photograph should be part of the Ralph Coffman collection. Accessioned November 29, 2018.

**2018.0056** Nancy Sorrells Collection, Addition. A collection of 40 folders containing brochures, pamphlets, clippings, and booklets about Augusta County, Waynesboro, and Staunton. She also included some Rockingham items and items relating to county government. Accessioned December 14, 2018. Donated by Nancy Sorrells.

**2018.0057** The Garber collection. This collection consists of undated and unidentified people and places in the 1930s-1960s. They are believed to be related or associated with the Garber family of New Hope. Also included are newspaper clippings in a scrapbook that pertain to Page County. A dress was also donated. Surnames associated with this collection are Garber, Mauck, Strickler, Borden, Root, Grove, Linweaver, Liskey, Beasley, Yorrer, Hamm, Graves, Brittan, Everett, Schlaback, and Walker. Accessioned January 1, 2019.

**2019.0001** The Sherwood Collection. This collection contains a group of advertising items such as a fan from the Staunton Furniture & Appliance Company, a 1977 calendar from the J. C. Sullivan Floor & Tile Service, a fan from the Etter Funeral Home, and a 1908 postcard from H. L. Jeweler. There are also two postcards with unknown photos of children from the Blakemore Studio of Staunton. Accessioned January 2, 2019. Donated by John and Harriet Sherwood.

**2019.0002** Will Moore Collection. This is a collection of newspapers, mostly the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, which shows local reaction to the Kennedy assassination, the rise of Lyndon Johnson to the presidency, and President Nixon's resignation. There is also a copy of the *Gordonsville Native Virginia* newspaper dated 1870 with references to Reconstruction. This 1870 newspaper is stored in the map cabinet in the Collins Room. Accessioned February 6, 2019, donated by Will Moore.

**2019.0003** Tom Wilkenson Collection. This collection contains the book *Virginia-Its Past, Present, and Future* by Armistead Gordon, signed by A. Erskine Miller. Illustrated. Accessioned March 19, 2019.

**2019.0004** Glenmore Hunt Book. This collection contains the book *Glen-*  
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more *Hunt-The First Thirty Years 1930-1960* by Colonel Hugh B. Sproul III. Also included are rosters of the charter members, officers, hunt staff, and bylaws. Accessioned March 19, 2019, donated by the author.

**2019.0005** The American Business Women's Association Scrapbook. This is a collection of clippings, menus, and programs from the American Business Women's Association 1971-1976. The scrapbook has been partially dismantled to stop acidification of contents. Accessioned March 19, 2019, donor unknown.

**2019.0006** The King's Daughters and Sons International Order, Staunton Circle. This is a large collection of minute books that trace the founding of the first hospital in Staunton to the building of the King's Daughters' Hospital on North Augusta Street. These minute books were found in the attic of the Braeburn House. Also other items found in the Braeburn House attic were the wallet of Alexander H. H. Stuart, a Joe Nutt drawing of the Patrick home Locust Isle, several ACHS banquet posters, and some pages from Dr. Richard MacMaster's *History of Augusta County*. Accessioned March 20, 2019, donated by Melissa Patrick.

**2019.0007** Delta Kappa Gamma Scrapbook. This scrapbook chronicles the organization activities from 1976 to 1982. It contains clippings from obituaries, programs, and newspaper articles. There is also a list of members. The scrapbook is stored in the Wilson Room. Accessioned March 20, 2019, donor unknown.

**2019.0008** Downs Collection. This collection consists of two folders and copies of *Augusta Country* newspaper.

Folder1: Brochures from Massanutten, Melrose, Natural Bridge, Shenandoah Caverns, Skyline Caverns, Grand Caverns, Endless Caverns, and Luray Caverns.

Folder 2: Photo of two people, photo of a house, and photo of a flower display. There is a campaign bandanna for Nancy Sorrells for Augusta County Board of Supervisors (2007), a copy of White Star Mills receipt, and a flyer for a Stuart talk.

*Augusta Country*: Volume 1, Issues 1, 2, 3 (1994)

Volume 2, Issues 1-11 (1995)

Volume 3, Issues 1-11 (1996)

Volume 4, Issues 1-11 (1997)

Volume 5, Issues 1-11 (1998)

Volume 6, Issues 1-10 (1999)

Volume 7, Issues 2-11 (2002)

Volume 8, Issues 2-10 (2001)

Volume 9, Issues 3-7 (2002)

Included in this collection was an article about an asafetida bag during the 1918 flu epidemic. Accessioned May 1, 2019, donated by Janet and Earl Downs.

**2019.0009** The Edward Leigh Shelky Collection. This collection consists of one "slave" coin dated 1852. It is a United States penny coin with two holes drilled in it. The coin was found at Deep Meadow Farm in approximately 1938, north of Dooms Crossing and west of South River in Augusta County by Martha Amelia Jennison Shelkey. She gave the coin to Edward "Ted" Shelkey in 2005. Deep Meadow Farm was owned by Archibald and May (nee Jennison) Frame. An article was also donated describing coins like the one given to the society. Citation: Lee, Lori (2011) "Beads, Coins, and Charms at a Popular Forest Slave Cabin (1833-1858," *Northwest Historical Archaeology*: Vol. 40, Article 6. Accessioned April 30, 2019, donated by Edward Leigh Shelkey.

**2019.0010** The Pamela Patrick Collection. This collection contains a photograph of men meeting at White Sulphur Springs in 1869 to discuss education, primarily in the South. The names of those in the photograph are listed on the back. General Robert E. Lee is in the photo. This photograph was the topic of a Stuart Talk in 2018 by Pamela Patrick. It was found in the attic of her parents' home. Accessioned May 1, 2019, donated by Pamela Patrick.

**2019.0011** The Robert Earl Alley Collection. This book *Joseph Alley and Elizabeth Miller-Their Descendants and Ancestors* chronicles the generations of the Alley family. Placed in Family History section of the library. Accessioned May 8, 2019, donated by Robert Earl Alley.

**2019.0012** The Robert Kyle Collection. This collection contains maps and plats related to the Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike and the acquisition of land for the Blue Ridge Parkway in Augusta and Nelson Counties.

1. Map of turnpike filed with Board of Public Works (BPW)
2. Metes & bounds of BPW map
3. Map of turnpike retained by William Massie and owned by Elizabeth Massie Goodwin of Tyro, VA.



4. Metes & bounds of Massie map
  5. Topographic map, circa 2000, of the area of the western portion of the turnpike
  6. Topographic map with 1832 metes & bounds superimposed, without scale factor applied.
  7. Topographic map with 1832 metes & bounds superimposed with scale factor applied.
  8. Maps and deeds pertaining to lands for the Blue Ridge Parkway in Augusta and Nelson Counties.
  9. Map of internal improvements (1848) from the BPW
  10. J. R. Hildebrand maps of Beverley (1954) and Bordon (1964) patents
  11. Virginia state map, Augusta County (1949)
  12. Undated advertising map of Rockbridge and Augusta Counties
  13. Photograph of painting of William Massie, from Pharsalia, Nelson County.
  14. CDs of maps
  15. Updated version of 2004 article on Howardsville Turnpike published in the *Augusta Bulletin* (36 pages).
- Accessioned March 22, 2019, donated by Robert P. Lyle.

**2019.0013** Nancy Bowman Collection. This collection contains the Glick family history and an updated notebook, reunion minutes and reports, roll book, and a file of historical documents.

1. *Across the Years, the Glick Family* by Joseph Glick Family Historical Committee, Charlotte, North Carolina: Delmar Printing Co., 1954 (located in library)
2. Notebook. *Across the Years Addendum* 1989 (located in library)
3. Glick Reunion Minutes (1959-1989)
4. Glick Reunion Treasurer Reports 1941-1976
5. Tape of Glick Family Reunion
6. Glick Family Reunion Roll Book 1911-2011
7. Historical family documents
8. DVD of Grace Glick Fleischman "Memories of my Grandparents" dated July 17, 2016.
9. DVD Glick Reunion 1941-1954
10. Newspaper clipping dated May 17, 2006 Quiltmakers at First Baptist Church, Staunton
11. Copy of book *Across the Years, a Story of and a Stream Through the Glick Family of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia*, dated 1959.

12. Glick Family Cookbook

Accessioned May 24, 2019, donated by Nancy Bowman

**2019.0014** The Waters Collection. This collection consists of four postcards from the Woodrow Wilson General Hospital, Staunton, Virginia (Fishersville today) dated probably 1943. They were sent by father of Charles Waters. Two booklets included:

1. Woodrow Wilson General Hospital, Thanksgiving 1943.
2. Woodrow Wilson General Hospital, Christmas 1943.

Accessioned June 18, 2019, donated by Charles Waters

**2019.0015** The Earl J. Downs Collection. This collection contains the following:

1. Booklet labeled *Mental Health in Virginia, Special Edition*. Volume 18, Winter 1968. No. 2. It contains a history of Western State Mental Hospital.
  2. Augusta County Historical Society 1998 Calendar
  3. *The Dispatch and News. Historical and Industrial Number 1761-1906 Staunton the Queen City*. Edited by Albert B. Walker. Augusta County Printing, no date.
  4. Brochure of Augusta County Railroad Museum and Model Railroad Club
  - 5. *Staunton News Leader* Clipping dated May 10, 2016 "Loving History, Preserving History."
  - 6. *Staunton Daily News* articles on Augusta County and Staunton by Joseph Waddell, Judge Lyman Chalkley, Charles Haines, and R. D. Haislip.
  7. Burkes Mill Poll Book dated May 25, 1893.
  8. Burkes Mill Poll Book dated November 6, 1900
- Accessioned August 13, 2019, donated by Earl J. Downs.

**2019.0016** The Pauline Knott Collection. This collection consists of fifteen newspaper pages from the *Daily News Record* and one booklet from the *Staunton News Leader*. Dates of the pages are 1981, 1985, 1986, and 1996. Most of the articles pertain to flooding in the Shenandoah Valley and West Virginia. One article focuses on the shuttle explosion. Accessioned August 13, 2019, donated by Pauline Knot of Mt. Solon.

**2019.0017** The Howard Clayton Smith Jr. Collection. This collection contains three ampex tapes of banjo music from the donor's aunt who lived

at Headwaters, Highland County, Virginia. She wrote a manuscript about banjo playing that is included with the tapes called "I'm Going to Pick This Old Banjo Till I Die." Also donated were:

1. Four family Bibles in very poor condition dated 1848, 1874, 1898 owned by the Hoge family.
2. *Armitage Booklet*
3. *Brief History of the Kerrs and Kin Booklet*
4. *The McClures of the Old Dominion 1630-1912*
5. Memorials of James Hogg (1885)
6. Washington and Lee Historical Papers No. 3 (1892)
7. Spotswood Letters
8. *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*:  
Volume II, July 1894  
Volume 1, July 1983  
Volume 1, 1892  
Letters of Governor Spotswood  
Proceedings of *Virginia Magazine* 1893
9. Special Report from the Congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Staunton

Accessioned June 25, 2019, donated by Howard Clayton Smith Jr.

**2019.0018** Donald Houser Jr. Collection. Mr. Houser donated two booklets to the library:

1. *Churches of Churchville* by Donald Houser Jr., 2012
2. *Remembering the Old Stone Fort* by Donald Houser Jr. and Lillian Peters, 2019.

Accessioned July 2, 2019, donated by Donald Houser Jr.

**2019.0019** The Nelse L. Greenway Collection. This collection consists of an original deed from Augusta County dated 1761 between David Miller and Fran. Fauquier for 170 acres of land on Buffalo Creek (Rockbridge County today). Located in map room, Drawer 17. Accessioned August 20, 2019, donated by Nelse Greenway.

**2019.0020** The Sam Biggers Collection. This is a master's thesis, "Orson Fowler's Influence in the Shenandoah Valley: Gravel Wall Buildings in Augusta County, Virginia." Hardbound, thesis. Dated May 2018. Self-Published. Accessioned August 20, 2019, donated by Sam Biggers.

**2019.0021** The Constance Rush Collection. This collection consists of a wallet, photograph album of the travels of the Stonewall Brigade Band, and various deed records, newspaper articles, and other private papers pertaining to the Heydenrich family of Augusta County. The collection was once owned by Jenny Louise Heydenrich who was executive director of King's Daughters' Hospital for thirty years. Other items were passed down from Paul H. Heydenrich who owned a "fancy" grocery store on Augusta Street in Staunton and later on Beverley Street.

1. Obituary of R. R. Heydenrich
2. Newspaper article dated 2006 mentioning Mrs. Heydenrich
3. Christmas card from R. R. Heydenrich
4. Newspaper article undated with a picture of R. R. Heydenrich
5. Article from *The Daily Southerner Newspaper* from Tarboro, North Carolina
6. Newspaper article dated October 20, 1960 (two copies) mentioning R. Heydenrich
7. Newspaper article undated mentioning Mrs. R. R. Heydenrich
8. Letter dated March 10, 1902 addressed to P. H. Heydenrich
9. Land Deed dated October 18, 1904 between P. H. Heydenrich and John Montague
10. Receipt for transfer of household goods from P. Heydenrich to P. H. Heydenrich and R. R. Heydenrich
11. Receipt dated February 14, 1894 belonging to P. H. Heydenrich
12. Deed of Trust dated May 1879 between F. O. Heydenrich and T. C. Elder
13. Deed dated July 2, 1875 between Egbert Harman and F. O. Heydenrich
14. Newspaper article dated January 23, 1973
15. Photograph of a cabin
16. Photograph of a creek
17. Newspaper article dated November 13, 1943 announcing Mrs. R. Heydenrich's retirement
18. Gavel
19. Grocery receipt dated 1894 from P. H. Heydenrich of 18 N. Augusta Street

Accessioned August 20, 2019, donated by Constance Rush.

**2019.0022** The Amelia Ammons Collection. This collection consists of a wool coverlet made in Augusta County. The blanket was made by Margaret

Payne Almond who was born 3/15/1854 and died 9/15/1947. She was married to William Almond, born in 1861 and died 7/29/1932. They are both buried in Thornrose Cemetery. Their daughter, Mabel Odell Almond Arehart, was the grandmother of the donor Amelia Ammons and she was born 9/7/1890 and died 10/15/62. She was married to Vastine Arehart, Sr., who worked for VDOT and was killed in a highway accident about 1936. The couple operated a sheep farm Middlebrook/Greenville area. They are buried at Mt. Hermon Church Cemetery in Newport. Accessioned September 17, 2019, donated by Amelia Ammons.

**2019.0023** The Carolyn Modarelli Collection. This collection consists of one copy of *The Dispatch and News. Historical and Industrial Number 1761-1906 Staunton the Queen City*. The editor was Albert Walker, published by Augusta County Printing Company of Staunton. Placed in box numbered 2017.0016 for safe-keeping. Bad condition. Accessioned September 17, 2019, donated by Carolyn Modarelli.

**2019.0024** The Rosen Collection. This collection consists of various vintage clothing items such as undergarments, knickers with matching vests, two dresses, two blouses, leather gloves, a pillow case, a purse, collar inserts, wool pieces, a baby's cap and wool socks. Some are hand-sewn while others are machine-made. They are located in the Wilson Room. Donated by Tommy Rosen at an unknown date. Had been stored in the basement. Accessioned September 17, 2019.

**2019.0025** The James Seaberg Collection. This collection consists of two copies of Augusta County manuscripts concerning the handling of impoverished children. The first manuscript is dated March 1, 1847, bounding out David Williams to a carpenter and the second manuscript is a handwritten note bounding out three children of Barbara Tisdale dated May 27, 1839. Accessioned September 10, 2019, donated by James Seaberg.

**2019.0026** The Janelle Juley Collection. This collection consists of two letters torn into small sections found by Janelle Juley in the rafters of an old barn she was tearing down on Todd Road, near Mt. Sidney. The barn had belonged to Mary Hawkins Wise and is believed to have been the home place of the Hawkins family from 1930 until the death of Mary. The letters recounted the 1942 experiences of Wade Hawkins at Fort Benning, Georgia. Wade was



the younger brother of Mary Wise. The collection contains:

1. One letter 1-6 pages long, transcribed by volunteer
  2. One letter 1-4 pages long, transcribed by volunteer
  3. Obituary of Wade Hawkins
  4. Various newspaper clippings of Wade and his family
  5. Wade's army enlistment
  6. The Facebook page of the farm's current owners
- Accessioned September 17, 2019, donated by Janelle Juley.

**2019.0027** The William Ross Collection. The collection contains a Purple Heart Medal awarded to William T. Bradley Jr.

1. One certificate awarding the Purple Heart Medal to Staff Sergeant William T. Bradley Jr. for Military Merit and for wounds received in action resulting in his death in April 1944.
2. One certificate signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt thanking the family for William Bradley's service in World War II. Dated July 11, 1944.
3. One letter from Adjutant General J. A. Ulio explaining how the Purple Heart Medal is awarded.
4. One copy of *The Evening Leader (Staunton Leader)* dated December 7, 1941 showing the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Vol. 74, No. 155.
5. One copy of the *Waynesboro News-Virginian* dated December 7, 1941 showing the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Vol. 50, No. 289. Accessioned September 17, 2019, donated by William Ross.
6. Portrait of William T. Bradley, Jr. who was KIA in WWII. Frame and portrait cleaned and restored and conserved with archival materials including conservation glass by Morgan Miles Picture Framers of Staunton, Va.
7. Article by Nancy Sorrells that tells the story of William T. Bradley, Jr. as well as several other Stuarts Draft men who were killed in WWII. Also included is a photograph of William Ross holding the portrait of his uncle William T. Bradley, Jr. The portrait was placed on the wall in the hallway of the Augusta County Historical Society offices in early 2020.

**2019.0028** Blue Ridge Disability Service Board Collection. This large collection consists of mainly papers that were thrown into boxes when the

organization closed its doors. The boxes remained in the basement for some time. These files have been organized into series and the accessioning is on-going at the moment.

We are in great need of acid-free boxes, tissue paper, and Mylar sheets to finish the work we have started. Donations would be appreciated. If you are thinking of giving a collection to the archives, please also think about the cost of properly protecting and preserving these items for future generations. Be generous. We would also like to ask for volunteers to transcribe the two large collections of Civil War letters we have recently received.

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Three types of membership in Augusta Pioneers are recognized. *First Families* of Augusta County is the membership category for those whose ancestors settled in the county in the period from its founding in 1738 (or before) to the year 1800. *Pioneer Families* of Augusta County is for those whose forbears settled in Augusta County in the nineteenth century, that is between the years 1801 and 1900. *Junior Pioneers* of Augusta County recognizes young people from the cradle to age eighteen who are descendants of First Families or Pioneer Families.

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